



# Using Grab Bars

By Joe Steckler, President, Helping Seniors of Brevard County

This article is for the thousands of us in Brevard County who use grab bars. I picked the topic while attempting to activate one of our Long-Term Care Insurance policies. The required form was short but did not include the type of care necessary to perform simpler activities of daily living; instead, it was structured to address dementia or skilled nursing care. After reading the form, I decided that the insurance company needed a simple statement of our needs and am working on that now. The other reason for this article was my own need for a grab bar when generally one was not available.

Consider the number of times that we visit with others in their homes. Throughout the United States there are many (most likely millions) of homes that could benefit from the installation of strategically placed grab bars in their guest bathrooms. The two most likely places would be near the commode and in the shower. YOU may not need such an appurtenance, but visitors to your home might be thankful for your thoughtfulness. Not a lot of us are as agile or flexible as we were years ago and would certainly use these devices.

Grab bars have become more pleasing in appearance, but the burnished stainless-steel ones are still available and do the job. What matters most is where you place them. Sit on the commode and imagine where you would put a bar if you thought you needed one, and that is most likely where


it should go. Consider also the thickness of the grab bar as well as its slipperiness when wet for a shower grab bar. The bar can be placed in a vertical or parallel position. We started with the parallel but later had a vertical bar installed close to the shower exit. Remember that these bars are intended to prevent a fall and should be placed where you think they will best assist you.

I think you would be surprised if you went to a store offering such bars and saw for yourself the changes that have been made. You might be more inclined to install bars in strategic locations in your home. If you are contemplating installation of grab bars, I recommend that you use the ones that are bolted or screwed into the wall or placement location. You may have had a guest dislocate a toilet paper holder or tear a sink away from the wall when leveraging themselves up from the toilet. Consider the person who is using the device for leverage, and their dismay when it is pulled from the wall. Also remember the size of the person you're trying to help and locate a safe sized device attached in a suitable location.

I am confident that you are aware that most of my articles are based on personal experience or associated with on-the-job training. Senior years are at times a challenge,

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