



Bathroom Accommodations

**Disclaimer: Inclusion of a resource on this list does not imply an endorsement by Cure SMA and Cure SMA is not responsible for claims made by outside parties.*

This list of resources is meant to guide you in finding resources and support in making a bathroom accessible. Please email familysupport@curesma.org with feedback on the resources provided here and to provide suggestions for resources to be added to this list.

The bathroom is a room of your house that is used often and by everyone and as such is one of the most important spaces, you'll want to ensure is fully accessible for your or your family's needs. Whether you are looking to do a full bathroom renovation or work with the bathroom you currently have and make adaptations, the list below will help you consider the various components of a bathroom and what will work best for you. Please note the information below are basic recommendations but may not work for everyone so adjust based on your own personal needs.

Questions to Ask as You Plan – Consider these questions as you plan to think through what equipment and accommodations will work best for your family.

- What activities will the individual need assistance with?
- Will the level of assistance that is needed change over time?
- What tasks can be done independently?
- Does the individual prefer a tub or shower?
- How much storage is needed in the bathroom (for medical supplies, for example)?
- Who else will be using the bathroom?
- Is there adequate space to turn in a wheelchair, if necessary?
- Is there space or a wall if grab bars need to be placed?

Bath & Shower Chairs

Bathtubs and showers are so important to make accessible for both individuals using them and others who may be assisting. To prevent injury and to make bathing as enjoyable and comfortable as possible, you'll want to make sure the space meets your needs fully.

Many bath and shower chairs can be used for both a bath and a shower. In the list below, we identify which can best be used for each or both situations. No matter what you choose, you want to ensure that it fits well in the space and provides adequate support for the user to bathe comfortably. Working with a trusted physical therapist can help you find what works best for you and can also help in requesting funding through insurance to purchase the item. Below are some equipment options to begin to explore.

Cure SMA Equipment Pool

Remember that Cure SMA has an equipment pool that is available for you to utilize free of charge.

Email equipment@curesma.org for more information!

1. **Tub Access Slider System** – This is a shower chair that helps with transferring, by sliding, over into a tub.
2. **Electric Bath Lift** – A shower or bath chair that has an electric lift feature that assists with easier transferring and lowers into a tub.
3. **Adjustable Bath seat** – A bath seat that can provide support and that can be adjusted depending on the user's needs.

4. **Bath Shower and Commode Transfer System** – This type of system can be used in the bath or shower, as well as a commode. Some also come with a variety of supports and accessories to meet the user's needs.

Roll or Walk-In Showers

For those that prefer a shower over a bath, there are low and no threshold showers that can easily accommodate a wheeled shower chair. The floors flow to a drain that is away from the entrance to the shower to keep the rest of the bathroom dry. It is very important to have textured tiles or some non-slip strips installed to help prevent falls and make transfers safer and easier. It is helpful to have the entrance to such a shower be at least 60" wide to allow for a complete turn of a shower chair.

Handheld shower heads, at least 60" long, allow easy washing and many people also like a stationary shower head that can be directed on the bather during the entire shower to help keep them warm. Consider where faucet controls are placed so that they can be accessible to the user and anyone assisting in bathing. Showers can include standing and sitting height grab bars, depending on your needs. Consider placement of personal items and bath towels to ensure they are conveniently located.

Walk-In Bath – For those who prefer a tub and are able to walk and bear weight on their legs, walk-in tubs can be a good option. These tubs are designed to be able to walk into without climbing over the wall of the tub. A door that closes seals and keeps the water in the tub.

Raised Tub – This refers to a tub that is built at a height that allows a person who is unable to sit up to be able to lay flat in a shallow tub. Additionally, it allows a caregiver to assist with bathing in a standing position instead of having to bend over. Another benefit of a raised tub is that it allows a lift to be positioned directly under the tub, making transfers easier.

Sink & Vanity

Sinks and vanities can be made accessible with a little effort and planning. Most important is to have a wall-mounted or open-front sink that provides at least 27" of knee clearance for the user. Keeping the height of the sink rim less than 34" inches will allow access to the sink. Consider the faucets you use on the sink. Single handle faucets may be preferred over faucets that need to be grabbed and twisted. Even more accessible are touchless faucets with sensors which don't require strength. For little cost, you can purchase faucet extenders that cause the water to flow closer to the front of the sink, making it easier for the user to wash and rinse their hands.

Ensure that towel bars, cabinets, and drawers are placed at a height that is accessible for the user. Additionally, consider where you'll mount outlets so the wheelchair user is able to access them as independently as possible. When considering vanity mirrors, mount the mirror just about sink height and consider purchasing mirrors that can tilt down so that someone seated in a wheelchair can see themselves fully.

Toilet

The ADA recommends a seat height of 17-19" for toilets. This is a height that is both comfortable and makes transfer in and out of a wheelchair easier. There are multiple ways to accomplish this change of height. A taller toilet can be purchased, or an elevated base can be used to raise the toilet. A thicker toilet seat can be installed to raise the height, or a toilet seat riser can be added to raise the height. Some seat risers have arms attached to assist with standing or stability. For most wheelchair users, the ideal toilet seat height should be level with the wheelchair for easier transferring. Toilet paper holders should be placed slightly forward of the toilet seat. In cases where inches matter, consider a flush mounted toilet paper holder. When adapting for toilet needs, consider a bidet to help with independence and easier personal hygiene. A bidet toilet seat is able to be added to an existing toilet so it is not necessary to purchase an entirely new bidet toilet. As you research options, it is helpful to consult with a trusted physical therapist who can give recommendations

based on your specific needs. There are many options and a physical therapist can also assist with trying to gain funding through insurance for the purchase of the system.

Lighting

An easy way to provide independence is to ensure lighting is accessible for everyone using the bathroom. Some people find that large rocker light switches are easier to use than traditional switches. You can install motion sensor lights or even “smart” lights that allow the lights to be operated by voice control. Both of these options are completely hands-free, making them accessible for many.

General Access and Safety

1. Grab bars can provide safety and stability both near the toilet and in the shower. Ideally, two grab bars placed no more than 36" apart on either side of the toilet is preferred. If that is not possible, installation of a single grab bar within 18" of the nearest wall is an option. There are also grab bars available that install on the rear wall where side walls are not available.
2. Staying warm while bathing/showering is important. Consider purchasing a space heater or finding another way to ensure the room stays warm enough to be comfortable when drying off, transferring, and dressing after a shower or bath. Heat lamps can also be installed as an additional option.
3. A table large enough to lay on, at waist or counter height, can be helpful to dress or manage hygiene with someone who is unable to sit up or stand.
4. Non-slip floors are an important safety feature throughout a bathroom, not only in a shower. Textured tiles can be installed to provide uniformity and safety.
5. Doors and doorways are another important consideration. Wide entry doors, at least 36 inches, and entries that have flush thresholds, allow for easy access to the bathroom. Another option is using “pocket” doors which conveniently slide into the wall, leaving a completely unobstructed entryway however these types of doors may be difficult for a wheelchair user to open and close independently. In tight spaces, you can also install the doors to open out from the bathroom to maximize the space within the bathroom. Install door handles versus knobs, which minimize the need for grasping and rotating.
6. Keep storage shelves, cabinets, and drawers at lower levels for easy access for wheelchair users.

Funding

As adaptive bathroom equipment can be costly, you may want to consider pursuing coverage through your medical insurance. A physical therapist can assist with what rationale a payor may need to approve coverage of a particular piece of equipment. Another resource to look into is a Flexible Spending Account (FSA), if your employer offers this benefit. An FSA is an account you can place pre-tax dollars in to utilize to purchase a variety of items not covered by health insurance. Adaptive equipment can often be purchased with these funds. If this is something you want to pursue, make sure you research thoroughly with your FSA provider to ensure that the equipment is a covered item that can be purchased using the funds. Lastly, if the individual needing assistance is enrolled in their state’s Medicaid waiver program, there may be resources to help cover the cost of equipment or remodeling costs associated with making a bathroom accessible. Speak with the assigned case manager to find out if this is an option.

Floor Plan Considerations

If you’re completing a full bathroom remodel, you’ll want to consider the amount of space you need for various accommodations. Here are some websites to help as you plan the space:

1. <https://www.rdmable.com/2019/06/21/creating-a-wheelchair-accessible-bathroom-floor-plan/>
2. https://inspectapedia.com/BestPractices/Bathroom_Design_Accessible.php
3. <https://www.archdaily.com/897689/plan-and-design-accessible-bathrooms-for-all-with-this-ada-design-guide-for-washrooms>