

## Doors: They can keep People in and They can keep People out.

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Decorating your home is more than choosing complimentary colors or making the room appealing to the eye. As we age, it is also vital that we create an environment that is functional and safe. This includes things such as the handles that we install on our doors. Doors keep us secure, provide privacy, protect us from elements and yet, for all of the good they provide, they can also add an element of entrapment for those who are not capable of opening them to escape harm. This is especially concerning for those with decreased ability to use fine motor skills. Let's review the reasoning for adapting hardware and the door handles that would be a good selection for using in a barrier free home, or in a home that is adapted for universal design.

Door knobs come in all types of designs and color schemes. Some are user friendly, and others may require the user to have lots of dexterity and the ability to use torque to open. It is important to take into consideration how difficult it may be for someone who suffers from arthritis\*, nerve damage, neuromuscular conditions or a stroke to manually grasp a round door handle tightly, and twist it to turn and open. Even those experiencing morning stiffness, painful, swollen joints and reduced dexterity would benefit from changing their door hardware to a more accommodating style.



Door handles that are designed as levers are the safest and easiest to manipulate. They allow you to use your hand, your elbow, foot or even a towel to press and gain access. When considering replacing this hardware throughout your home, there are three basic categories. The “Privacy” lever set is the type that can be locked from the inside. It will have a push button emergency release. This type of doorknob would be placed on a bedroom or bathroom. The second category is called “Passage” lever. This is the selection for interior doors such as closets and doors in hallways, where locking would not be required. The third common category is called a “Keyed entry”. This is a lever set that locks, using a key on the outside and with a push button or turn piece on the inside. Keyed entry functions are most commonly used on exterior doors around the house, such as front doors, side doors and back doors, where locks would be utilized for security purposes.



There is a vast selection of ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant hardware available at local stores and online. This type of hardware is designed so that it can be easily operated by individuals with disabilities. A standard interior passage door lever in a satin nickel finish costs from \$12 to \$25; you'll pay \$25 to \$50 for a lockable lever set for your bath or bedroom. Replacing door knobs with handles is an easy and inexpensive way to improve a home's functionality and safety.

\*According to the Centers for Disease Control, an estimated 67 million adult Americans will have arthritis by 2030. For them to have a more productive life, they'll need doors that are easier to open.

For additional information about access and other issues that face seniors and the disabled, contact [Katrina@etnlife.com](mailto:Katrina@etnlife.com)