



## PRODUCTS FOR EASY LIVING

“Why haven’t they ever invented something...?” or “With all of the technological advances that have been made, why hasn’t someone thought of an easier way to do....?” How many times have you hear or asked questions similar to these as we struggle with various frustrations while cooking, cleaning, working with hobbies, communicating with others, taking care of personal needs and traveling around town.

Many low-technology and low-cost gadgets and devices that make daily living easier have always been available. They have been available through catalogs, specialty shops and department stores. With the current emphasis on universal design and independent living more of them are available now than ever before.

These products can ease your frustration in threading a needle and trying to open a stubborn jar lid. They can help to bring items on high shelves within your reach, remind you of whether you have taken medicine or not, help with cleaning hard-to-reach places and assist in communicating with others. Innovative devices of all kinds help with cleaning hard-to-reach places and assist in communicating with others. Innovative devices of all kinds help with hobbies, doing everyday tasks and controlling your environment with the flick of a finger.

These products may be called by a generic name or a brand name. However, once you become familiar with some of these products, you’ll discover them in sources close to

home such as the grocery store, drug store, hardware store, department store, medical supply house, computer store and telephone company.

Some of the tools can be made with common household items while others will have to be purchased. Check with your friends, ask questions during appointments with doctors or in shopping at specialty shops and hardware stores. Browse through catalogs (many are free for the asking) and keep a sharp eye when shopping for other items in grocery stores and department stores. Also check with hospital and medical suppliers, computer and telephone shops and other specialty shops in your area. Check, too, for toll free 800 numbers that are available, including one for ABLE DATA in Washington, D.C. This rehabilitation agency has lists of 15,000 products. By dialing 1-800-346-2741, you will receive a computer listing of the product with manufacturer’s names, where to buy it, a description and evaluation of the product and other information that they may have about the product. Listings of 100 products or less will cost approximately \$10.00. However information about two or three items can be obtained simply by calling the toll-free number. Many catalogs also have toll-free numbers.

When buying any product, use good consumer practices. Look at each product and decide what is best for you. Consider safety, quality, dependability, ease in handling and cost. Before making any purchase, be sure to consider these points:

1. What is the company’s reputation? Deal with a good reputable company. Check with your local Better Business Bureau if you feel that you want additional information about the company before purchasing. If it is a local company, check with friends to see what experiences they may have had with them.
2. Check all warranties and guarantees. Read it carefully...even the fine print! (A small magnifying glass can be a handy shopping tool.) Ask questions! Be sure any warranty contains the information that you feel is important.
3. Some products come with a purchase or lease option. If so, do some cost estimates to compare the cost of renting and purchasing a product for the length of time it’s needed. Is it more cost-effective to rent or buy it?  
If working with a lease contract, be sure that it contains a description of the product, insurance arrangements, warranty, length of time needed, method of payment plus any other additional charges and any other conditions related to the lease. In addition to this information be sure that the names, addresses and telephone numbers of both parties are included.
4. If you make catalog purchases, check for money-back guaranty and preferably a toll-free number for consumer questions

- before and/or after purchase.
5. When evaluating any product, consider how safe and durable the product is. For instance, if the product is to support weight or product is to support weight or stress, what are the manufacturer's suggestions on use and stress limitations? Products that are to be permanently installed should give complete instructions, including the recommended means (adhesives, nails, screws, etc.).
  6. Evaluate how easy the product is to use. How heavy it is? If movable, is it easy to move? Does it suit the purpose and the person who will be using it?
  7. If purchasing a product from a local store, will they deliver and/or install the product? If so, is there an additional charge? If a product must be assembled, can you do this or must you find someone else to help you?
  8. Check on the policy for repairs and servicing. How quickly will these repairs be made? If the product is essential, will they supply you with a replacement until your product is fixed?
  9. Ask about the exchange or refund policy...just in case the product doesn't work out.
  10. Get everything in writing on the sales receipt or contract. You may even want to check into the possibilities of a patent for your intention!  
Use your own creativity and imagination, too! Perhaps you can turn a questions that starts out "Why haven't they come up with...?" into a new device that will solve your problem.  
When coming up with your own devices, be sure to check on safety and ease of use. Stress-bearing products must not come apart, materials must not be

slippery or cause a fall and anything electrical must meet certain safety specifications. Make your life a little easier and safer by looking for low-cost, low technology products for use in work and leisure time activities. The key to easier living starts with you!

## RESOURCES

(Also be sure to check local and state offices and organizations for potential resource people.)

### **Adoptive Environments Center (National Center for Access Unlimited)**

374 Congress Street, Suite 301  
Boston, MA 02210  
(617) 695-1225

Ask for Publications List. This non-profit center offers resource materials on accessible and adaptive design and accessibility legislation, standards and guidelines.

### **American Association of Retired Persons**

601 E Street NW,  
Washington, DC 20049  
Attn: Consumer Affairs  
1-800-424-3410

Publications include: The Perfect Fit and The Doable Renewable Home

### **American Parkinson Disease Information and Referral Center**

1-800-840-APDA

### **Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers (AHAM)**

1-312-984-5800 (Information Center)  
20 North Wacker Drive  
Chicago, IL 60606

For information related to modifying

major home appliances and suggested products for independent living, kitchen and laundry designs, contact the appliance manufacturer. If you do not have the address and phone number of the company, call or write AHAM.

### **Consumer Assistance Center**

Whirlpool Corporation  
1-800-253-1301 (24 hours a day)  
2303 Pipestone Road  
Benton Harbor, MI 49022  
Publication names:

*Designs for Independent Living*  
*Tools for Independent Living*  
*The Less Challenging Home*

### **Barrier Free Environments (BFE)**

1-919-782-7823  
P. O. Box 30634  
Water Garden, Highway 70 West  
Raleigh, NC 27622

Is a design firm specializing exclusively in the design of products and buildings to be used by elderly and disabled people. They have publications available.

### **Center for Accessible Housing**

1-919-515-3082  
North Carolina State University  
P. O. Box 8613  
Raleigh, NC 27695-8613

Jan Reagan, Information Specialist  
The CAH conducts research on making housing accessible to people with disabilities. The center publishes several home modification guides.

### **Department of Veterans Benefits**

Veterans Administration  
Washington, D.C. 20420  
Publication: VA pamphlet 26-13  
Handbook for Design: Specially Adapted Housing, April, 1978

### **Maytag**

Consumer Information Center  
Newton, IA 50208  
Publication available:  
The Accommodating Kitchen  
\$2.00

**National Arthritis Foundation**  
1-703-276-7555  
National Headquarters  
1909 Fort Myer Drive, Suite 507  
Arlington, VA 22209

**American Foundation for the Blind**  
1-212-620-2039  
National Headquarters  
15 West 16<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10011

**American Council for the Blind**  
1-202-467-5081  
1-800-424-8666  
1010 Vermont Avenue, N.W.  
Suite 1100  
Washington, D.C. 20005

**National Association for Hearing and Speech Action**  
1-800-638-8225  
10801 Rockville Pike  
Rockville, MD 20852

**American Occupational Therapy Association**  
1-301-948-8226  
National Headquarters  
1383 Puccard Drive, Suite 300  
Rockville, MD 20850

**Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc.**  
1-303-657-2248 (V)  
1-303-657-2249 (TTY)  
National Office  
78 Wisconsin Avenue  
Bethesda, MD 20814

**NICHY (National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities)**  
1-800-695-0285 (Voice/TT)  
1-202-884-8200 (Voice/TT)  
1-202-884-8441 (FAX)  
P. O. Box 1492  
Washington, D.C. 20013-1492  
Internet: nichcy@aed.org  
Special NetUser Name: NICHY  
Services: Personal responses to questions on disability issues.  
Referrals to other organizations.

Information searches of NICHY's databases and library. Technical assistance to parent and professional groups. NICHY is a project of the Academy for Educational Development and is operated through a cooperative agreement with the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education.

**The NAHB Research Center (National Association of Home Builders)**  
1-301-249-4000  
1-301-249-0305 (FAX)  
400 Prince George's Boulevard  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772-8731  
Ask for their publication list. They also offer an 88-page illustrated catalog listing 180 commercially available products for people with disabilities. The Catalog is available for \$3.50 which covers the cost of shipping and handling.

**The National Rehabilitation Information Center (NARIC) AND ABLEDATA Database of Assistive Technology**  
1-800-346-2742  
8455 Colesville Road, Suite 935  
Silver Springs, MD 20910-3319  
This is an information clearing house for accessible housing literature, resource organizations and safety products. You can receive information on van lifts, car seats, powered scooters, ramps, stair lifts, standing aids and other products and services.



## CATALOGS

**After Therapy**  
1-800-326-1750

**Alsto' Handy Helpers**  
1-800-477-0048

**CLEO, INC.**  
1-800-321-0595  
1-800-587-9880 (FAX)  
3957 Mayfield Road  
Cleveland, OH 44121

**Disabled Doesn't Mean Inable, Adaptive Aids**  
Becky's Treasurers, Inc.  
909 E. Skagway Ave.  
Tampa, Florida 33604-1747

**Fred Sammons, Inc.**  
1-800-323-5547  
1-708-325-4602 (FAX)  
145 Tower Drive  
Burr Ridge, IL 60521  
Catalog Title: Enrichments

**For Convenience Sake**  
Telephone: 1-800-242-9763  
(24 hours/day)  
4092B Howard Avenue  
Kensington, MD 20895  
Catalog Title: Practical Products for Easier Living

**Maddak, Inc.**  
1-201-628-7600  
1-201-305-0841 (FAX)  
Pequannock, NJ 07440-1993  
Catalog Title: "Abelware"  
Available locally from:  
Grogans Health Care Supply  
1-606-254-6661 or  
1-800-365-0510  
1016 South Broadway  
Lexington, KY 40504

**Medic Alert System**  
1-800-ID-ALERT

**National Institute on Disability and Rehab**  
1-800-355-5404  
Self-help devices

**North Coast Medical, Inc.**  
1-800-821-9319  
1-408-283-1950  
187 Stauffer Boulevard  
San Jose, CA 95125-1042  
Catalog Names:  
ADL Catalog

Health and Safety Catalog  
After Therapy Catalog

**Sears, Roebuck and Company**  
1-800-326-1750

Catalog available from retail stores  
or toll-free number Catalog name:  
"The Home Health Care Catalog"

**Super Walking Stick**  
P. O. Box 251

Topeka, KS 66601  
\$27.00 (No phone orders)  
(For people over 6'2" - order tall)

**J.C. Penney Company, Inc.**  
1-800-222-6161

Catalog available from retail stores  
or toll-free number  
Catalog Name:  
For Your Special Needs

**Yes, I Can**  
35-325 Palm Drive, Suite 131  
Cathedral City, PA 92234



### ON-LINE-WW WEB:

**Virginia Assistive Technology System**  
1-800-435-8490 (by phone)  
1-800-238-7955 (by modem)  
(On-line database)

**Trading Post Line (VATS)**  
1-800-435-8490 (by phone)  
(equipment exchange BBS or  
EEBBs-equipment for sale, trade,  
give away)  
1-804-662-9477 (by modem)



### REFERENCE BOOKS

*The Gadget Book, Ingenious Devices for Easier Living* edited by Dennis R. LaBuda for the American Society on Aging. An AARP book published

by American Association of Retired Persons, Washington, D.C. Scott, Foresman and Company, Glenview Illinois. 1985. \$10.95. OUT-OF-PRINT. Check local library. This is an excellent resource book that contains more than 325 items, including illustrations, purposes, description, approximate cost and names and addresses of manufacturers and distributors.

*Beautiful Barrier Free: A Visual Guide to Accessibility.* Liebrock, Cynthia. Published by Van Nostrand Reinhold. 1991. \$59.95

*Housing Interiors for the Disabled and Elderly.* Raschko, Bettyann Boetticher. Published by Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York. \$39.95

*Barrier Free Residential Design.* Peloquin, Albert. Published by McGraw Hill, Inc. \$50.00

*The Accessible Housing Design File.* Mace, Ronald L. Published by Van Nostrand Reinhold. \$47.95

*The Complete Guide to Barrier-Free Housing: convenient Living for the Elderly and Physically Handicapped.* Branson, Gary D., White Hall, VA. Betterway Publications, 1991. 720.42 B735c (circulating copy at Central Library)

*Building for a Lifetime: The Design and Construction of Fully Accessible Homes.* Wylde, Margaret A., Newtown, Ct. Taunton Press, C1994. 690.8W977b (circulating copy at the Central Library)



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