

Create an accessible kitchen design



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The kitchen is where style and function best come together: nowhere else does the efficiency of many small tasks make such a difference.

This is why many homeowners focus on adapting their kitchens to their needs. But what if those needs change?

Kitchen features that work well for us today may become harder to use or less convenient as we age, while guests who want to help in the kitchen may have different needs.

There are many design techniques to make your kitchen more efficient and accessible for everyone — regardless of age or ability.

What are your needs? When planning a kitchen design, it's important to take into account your immediate and long-term needs, and those of others who

might use the space to cook, dine, or help out. That also means thinking about how the kitchen is used. Do people eat in the kitchen, or elsewhere? Do many people cook at the same time, and what appliances are they most likely to use? Does anyone have trouble getting around the kitchen, use a wheelchair or walker or have difficulty seeing or hearing?

Responding to these considerations involves looking at the kitchen as a whole. First, assess the layout of the kitchen to determine whether common tasks can be accomplished efficiently.

Most kitchen designs centre on the “work triangle” of the sink, stove, and refrigerator. For efficiency, this triangle should be compact, but with enough room to manoeuvre a wheelchair or walker at each station.

In addition to the work triangle, planning for efficiency should include the location of other work areas such as the

dishwasher and garbage disposal.

Second, evaluate each work area for ease of use. Are appliances, controls, storage shelves for commonly used items, and safety features within easy reach? Can they be made easier to use?

Emptying the dishwasher is easier if the dishes and glasses are stored nearby. Features such as a wall-mounted oven at countertop height and knee space under counters and sinks can make these areas more accessible to people in wheelchairs, for example, while hands-free faucets can help simplify anyone's work at the sink.

Third, determine if the kitchen design is safe for all users. Lighting levels should be adjustable, supplemented by task lighting in key work areas and for specific workstations and islands.

People with visual impairments may require more light and different coloured surfaces to mark changes in height. Select flooring materials that are durable, comfortable and have a safe, non-slip surface when both dry and wet.

As people often depend on more than one sense to tell them when the cooking is done, having appliances with both visual and audio signals is beneficial to all.

Any kitchen redesign has space, budget, and style considerations. Homeowners now have many options for meeting their needs.

If you are choosing countertops and cabinets, look for designs that allow variety of heights for work surfaces, knee spaces for wheelchair access, and high-contrast finishes.

Look for cabinets and storage systems that allow important, everyday, items to be easily reached from a sitting position.

Appliances with both visual and auditory alarms, and feature switches and controls that are easy to reach and use are available.

Many lighting options can be adapted to improve focus on specific work areas, to minimize glare, and to improve overall safety.

There are a variety of solutions available that can help you create a kitchen that functions better for you and your family.



Planning a kitchen means thinking about how the kitchen is used. Do many people cook at the same time, and what appliances are they likely to use?

To help you plan a kitchen redesign with everyone in mind, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has an About Your House fact sheet called Accessible Housing by Design—Kitchens. Download your free copy at www.cmhc.ca.

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Your home's exterior: What is EIFS and why should I consider it?



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If you take a drive in any rural area, you'll notice a majority of homes have a brick exterior.

Dolores Ursini, vice-president of DuROCK Alfacing International Ltd., the leading manufacturer of exterior insulation finish systems, talks to eieihome.com about the benefits of choosing an alternative to brick: Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems (EIFS).

The DuROCK Pressure-Utilized Compartmented Cavity System (PUCCS), a HOLMES APPROVED system, provides the superior EIFS drainage system.

PUCCS has a dual plane of protection against water intrusion protecting the building or home's substrate, explains Ursini.

“Water is a huge problem when it gets behind any cladding — brick, aluminum,” she says.

PUCCS has a patented geometrically defined drainage cavity on the back side of the insulation board with a built-in 10mm air space to ensure proper air filtration and drainage, unlike conventional systems that drain through ribbons of adhesive created by the installer.

PUCCS was developed in 2004, but it wasn't until early this year that the new Ontario Building code, Part 9 - residential construction, requires a geometrically defined drainage cavity board for EIFS, the exact system DuROCK developed years earlier. This system ensures the wall will not rot, grow mould or delaminate.

EIFS offers better energy consumption. Heat loss occurs through many parts of your home, especially through the exterior walls. Unlike other forms of exterior systems, EIFS acts as an energy-efficient thermal blanket for your home. It leaves minimal gaps, meaning there are less places for air to escape, and this can aid in the reduction of your yearly energy consumption.

EIFS will suit any home.

EIFS can be made to resemble stone, brick or even siding. There are a variety of colours, textures and designs to choose from, making it easy for you to find one that suits your style and taste.

DuROCK stands by its product. Customers who purchase exterior products from DuROCK Alfacing International Ltd. will never have to worry about warranty issues. “We stand behind our product,” says Ursini. “Customer satisfaction and quality service are the reason we have such loyal clientele.”

For more than 35 years, this Canadian family-owned business has been manufac-



turing quality coatings and exterior finish systems that promote the sustainability of the environment.

DuROCK's broad range of products and systems are subjected to extensive testing to ensure they meet Canadian National Building Code requirements. DuROCK has an excellent reputation for innovation, quality and cus-

tomers service that far exceeds industry standards.

— Visit www.durock.ca or call 1-888-238-6345 for more information.
— Visit eieihome.com for more home exterior stories, including “A Guide to Home Exteriors,” contractor reviews and find local service professionals.

