



What is Universal Design for Homes?

Universal design is one of many names that describe buildings that are physically 'enabling' – for all life stages and all capabilities. A universally designed building will be **accessible**, **safe** and **functional**, whether the level of disability is temporary or permanent and will cater to a large range of physical abilities. It recognises that a well designed house meets its occupants' physical and aesthetic needs while minimising compromise.

It's plain smarter!



■ Why have it?

Having a home that is designed to suit a wide range of human capabilities has the following benefits:

- ▶▶ The building is **safer** and more usable for every occupant at all times.
- ▶▶ It makes it **easier** for parents of young children, those with a temporary injury or when less able-bodied people are staying temporarily.
- ▶▶ It allows the house to meet the **needs** of the occupiers as they age or their situation alters through injury or impairment.
- ▶▶ It adds little to the **cost** of the house – especially if done at the design stage.
- ▶▶ It has a wider **appeal** to prospective house buyers.

□ What features are typically needed?

This will depend on the current design specifications and how enabling the owners want their house to be, but some key features include:

- ▶▶ creating wider than standard passageways and doors for easier access
- ▶▶ installing at least one bedroom on the ground level
- ▶▶ installing at least one bathroom that can accommodate a wheelchair or physical impairment
- ▶▶ power sockets and light switches that can be accessed from standing or sitting position
- ▶▶ easy, unimpaired access to the front door and primary living areas of the house.

Note that the finished design need not look any different than a less accessible 'standard' house!

□ How can I incorporate these features into my home?

The first and probably most important step is to take professional advice, through your designer/architect – they will provide you with a series of options depending on your specific circumstances. The earlier you seek information, the easier and cheaper it will be to incorporate universal design features that work well with your home.

Want more information?

See the BRANZ website:
www.branz.co.nz/universal_design