ALS & HOME MODIFICATIONS

A Les Turner ALS Foundation Guide for People Living with ALS

LES TURNER ALS FOUNDATION®

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Disclaimer Statement: The information in this guide is not medical advice. Talk to your ALS care team before making any decisions about your health or treatment. Together, you and your care team can find a treatment plan that works for you.

Last Reviewed: September 29, 2026, by the expert Occupational and Physical Therapists at the Lois Insolia ALS Clinic at the Les Turner ALS Center at Northwestern Medicine.

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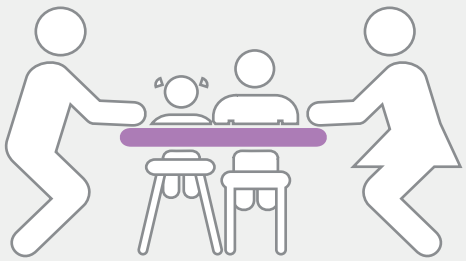
Home modifications to ease mobility and care for people living with ALS

Whether adding a ramp, remodeling, or moving, information about what features are useful and practical is important, especially as adding unnecessary or poorly designed elements add costs to a budget. Your ALS care team can provide you with resources and help brainstorm cost effective ways to modify your home.

While no two people with ALS are alike or will progress the same way, there is a great deal of collective knowledge and wisdom available from your ALS care team, people living with ALS and caregivers. Our intention is to provide you with information that you need today and tomorrow.

Consider **moving to the most accessible level of the home**. Make modifications on that level to meet needs for toileting and bathing. For example, having a bedroom on the main floor or use of portable showers.



Consider both your **short-term and long-term needs** and the needs of your family.

Hire contractors that use Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. Easy access to the home for walking or using a wheelchair must be considered.

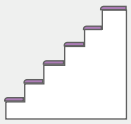
Keep an open mind and look at all home modification options.

Types of lifts that require installation

Platform lifts

Platform lifts can be placed at doorways inside or outside the home. Placement depends on the location of the stairs and the space for the lift itself.

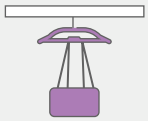
Platform lifts can be placed inside bi-level and tri-level homes. This allows the use of two levels without major renovation to the home.



Stair lifts

Stair lifts can be rented or bought. They can be fitted to straight or curved stairs. The cost of a stair lift depends on the length and curve of your stairs. Your sitting balance and neck strength must be considered. Some stair lifts have a fold-up seat which can allow for more space in the stairwell.

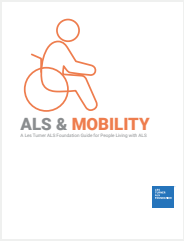
A wheelchair at the top and bottom of the stairs is needed if the person cannot stand.



Ceiling lifts

Ceiling lifts can be installed almost anywhere in the home to meet your transfer needs. Ceiling lifts will allow you to be moved from room to room. They can be made to go throughout your home or just between two rooms, such as a bedroom and bathroom.

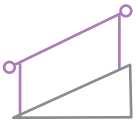
To learn more about types of manual lifts, visit lesturnerals.org/mobility



Ramps

The **recommended angle** for a ramp is 12 horizontal inches of ramp for every 1 vertical inch of rise or a 12:1 ratio. A 12-foot ramp is recommended for a 1-foot rise.

You must consider **local building ordinances** when planning a ramp. Portable, folding, aluminum ramps are available in-store or online.



A **handrail or wheel-rail** should be attached along the sides of the ramp.

Contact a **contractor who is ADA compliant** for more information.

A **platform of least 36 x 36 inches** will allow the wheelchair to safely sit outside the door before going up or down the ramp. This space will also allow you to turn your wheelchair around completely.

Elevators

Elevators can be installed for two or three levels within a home. An assessment for adequate space is necessary.

Doors and hallways

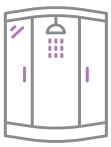
A doorway must be at least 32 inches wide with a door that swings inward for a wheelchair to go through.

Offset door hinges can replace regular door hinges. This will give you about 1 to 2 inches more clearance.

The widths of the hallways and the space available for turning your wheelchair must be at least 36 inches.

Wheelchairs are too wide to go through most bathroom doors. You need a 24- to 25-inch-wide bathroom doorway for a rolling shower commode chair.

Bathrooms



Shower stalls are easier to get into than bathtubs. Remodeling is very expensive, but makes bathing easier. A walk-in or roll-in shower with a recessed drain allows a shower chair easy access for bathing.

Install grab bars, especially around the shower and toilet, in the bathroom for increased safety.

Non-skid surfaces in the shower also increase safety.

Consider remodeling your sink to be wheelchair accessible.

To learn more about different aids for bathing and toileting that do not require home modifications, visit lesturnerals.org/daily-activities

Learn more

The Les Turner ALS Foundation exists to guide you to answers, support you and your loved ones and advance scientific research. To learn more about living with ALS visit, lesturnerals.org/resources.

My ALS Decision Tool™

If you have ALS, you will need to make some important decisions about your health care. As your disease progresses, your ALS care team may recommend different care options. You can use this tool to learn about some common ALS treatments, answer a few questions to help you think through what is most important to you and get ready to talk with your ALS care team about your options. To learn more visit: alsdecisions.org.

MY ALS™ DECISION TOOL

ALS Learning Series

Our online ALS Learning Series aims to empower the ALS community through the latest information and insights. Educational webinars and interactive Q&A's covering a diverse array of topics, from nutrition to respiratory care, are offered monthly featuring members of the Foundation's Support Services team, our Lois Insolia ALS Clinic at Northwestern Medicine and other national ALS experts. To learn more about ALS care and research visit: alslearningseries.org.

ALS LEARNING SERIES

My ALS Communication Passport to Quality Care

My ALS Communication Passport to Quality Care was created to make your life easier. You will be able to share health information and care preferences with caregivers. You have a lot of information to keep track of, and this tool will help you do that. To find out more, visit: lesturnerals.org/passport.

MY ALS COMMUNICATION PASSPORT TO QUALITY CARE

Support Groups

We facilitate support groups to provide people living with ALS, their caregivers and families the opportunity to share their experiences, give encouragement and help each other navigate their journey with ALS. To find out more, visit: lesturnerals.org/support-groups.

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