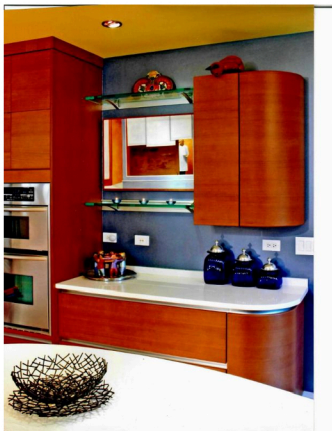


# Accessible Kitchen Design Can Make Meal Preparation Easier



Services for Adults Staying in Their Homes



**Making Your Kitchen Function For You**  
By Leslie Markman-Stern, ASID

Having a kitchen that allows you to live independently and safely is a concern especially as we age. Trying to prepare for the changes that may accompany us as we grow older can be challenging. Many times you may ask yourself, "Are the appliances and storage within reach? Is there enough light to take care of the tasks? Is there a safe place to sit while I prepare food? Is there easy access to storage, appliances and work surfaces? Is the room wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs or walkers if needed at a later date?"

Careful planning before making changes is critical. Performing a needs analysis to examine your existing space for functionality and aesthetics is essential.

## The Kitchen Triangle



Imagine how you will utilize the room. Start with a floor plan in developing your space. Make sure there is a cooking triangle encompassing the sink area, cooking area and refrigerator. These are the areas most heavily used. Ensure there is sufficient counter space adjacent to each of these areas for safe placement and removal of items from cooktop, oven, microwave, sink and refrigerator. You need a minimum of two linear feet for

placement of dishes, casserole dishes and other items. Without adequate adjacent space accidents can happen. For example, turning around to place a hot pot, a wet dish or milk carton on a counter behind you can cause you to lose your balance and fall.

Safe storage should be developed as a next step. Make sure dishes are stored adjacent to sink and dishwasher, pots and pans placed next to or under a cooktop and pantry space near the refrigerator. You should use rollout shelves, full extension glides and soft close drawers for easy reach and convenient use. Items should be stored in such a way as to prevent you from reaching too high or too low frequently which can cause you to lose your balance.

## Comfort + Access

Create a space where you can sit while preparing food or eating a meal. When selecting kitchen counter tops select easy to maintain surfaces such as quartz, quartzite or granite materials. Marble easily stains and is not clean friendly. Make sure the edges and corners are rounded to avoid injury to a hip or a grandchild's eye.

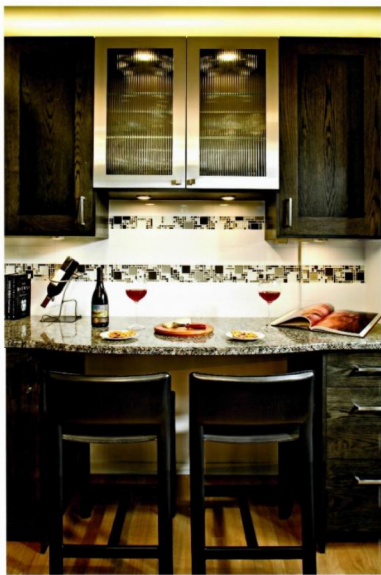
Lighting is another important consideration. As we grow older, it becomes increasingly difficult to see. Give careful consideration to proper placement of lighting fixtures to minimize the risk of eye strain. Under cabinet lighting gives the greatest illumination for countertops.

Chose LED lights as they have the longest usage life and is the closest to daylight in coloration. Electrical outlet placements should follow your city and village codes but you should always use ground fault interrupters (GFCIs) which can prevent electrocution.

## Be kind to your spine

When specifying attractive flooring think about hardwood, bamboo and vinyl which are easier on your spine. Porcelain, ceramic and stone floors are beautiful but your back and legs can tire quickly. Hardwood, bamboo and vinyl can also be easily repaired or replaced if damaged.

In conclusion, when planning your kitchen consider your floor plan, storage needs, materials and lighting to achieve the space of your dreams that you will enjoy for many years to come.



## Leslie Markman–Stern,ASID

Leslie Markman–Stern has had a full service commercial and residential interior design firm, Leslie M. Stern Design, for the last thirty years. With a long history of working with seniors and those who have special needs, her firm offers a holistic approach to creating a safety conscious, functional and beautiful environment so older adults and those who have special challenges can live independently and safely at home. Thought is given to creating a resalable product for the future too.