



A quick look at kitchens

What you choose for your kitchen will be influenced by:

- How you get about (walking or wheelchair)
- Whether you stand or sit to work in the kitchen
- Any movements that are particularly difficult, e.g. holding or reaching appliances
- Any vision, thinking or planning limitations
- Possible risks to your safety, e.g. whether you can control stove and water temperatures
- Space needed to use any assistive equipment, e.g. a wheeled walker
- Space for a carer providing assistance
- Others who may use the kitchen
- Plans for accommodating changing needs in the future

These will affect the amount of space required to enable people to move freely, the layout of the kitchen, the need for storage within easy reach and the choice of appliances and fittings.

Design features to consider

Layout and safety:

- Kitchens need to be designed specifically for the intended user(s).
- For maximum circulation space, a U or L-shaped kitchen layout may be preferable. Galley style may be suitable for a person who may benefit from using the benches for support.
- Floor surface should be slip-resistant, firm, durable and easy to clean.
- Flooring material should cover the entire floor area of the kitchen. This enables cupboards to be removed in the future to accommodate a person's changing

needs and the floor remains intact, reducing the costs associated with modifications.

- Circulation space, particularly for wheelchair users, needs to be adequate to allow them to manoeuvre around the kitchen.
- If practicable, doors opening into the kitchen should swing outwards, or be sliding, to maximize circulation space.

Benches:

- The bench height should suit a standing or sitting user.
- There are height adjustable bench tops which may be operated manually or electrically.
- Allow sufficient under-bench width and depth for sitting.
- Allow clearance under the sink and stove for a person who is sitting.
- Fit bench tops with rounded edges, and non-reflective surfaces.
- Consider the contrast between the colour of the bench top and the colours of surrounding surfaces, e.g. walls and cupboards. The percentage contrast should be at least 30% - paint suppliers can calculate this.
- Provide unbroken bench surfaces between the sink and the cook top to assist with sliding (rather than lifting) items from one area to another.
- A foot recess under cupboards will accommodate wheelchair footplates.

Storage:

- Allow maximum storage within reach of a sitting or standing user.
- Fit adjustable shelving.
- Install drawers on easy-glide or self-closing runners.
- Fit lightweight wire pull-out racks and baskets.
- Build corner cupboards with bi-fold doors, hinges which allow door opening through 180°, and 'lazy susan' rotating shelf storage.
- A storage trolley which provides an extra work surface can be wheeled to a convenient position for use.
- Design a walk-in pantry fitted with U-shape, reachable shelving and pull-out baskets.

- Consider the style and position of door and drawer handles. D-shape handles are generally preferred.
- Cupboard door-closing mechanisms could be soft roller catches, press release, magnetic latches or self-closing hinges.

Lighting, power and switches:

- Choose light and power switches that are operated with large rocker pads.
- General room lighting should be even and glare-free, with additional specific task directed lighting.
- Install two-way light switches if there is more than one entry to the kitchen.
- Locate power points where they are easily accessible. The edge of the bench or the fascia of the bench may be suitable for at least one outlet.

Appliances:

- A wall oven and separate cook top may offer more convenient placement options than a conventional stove.
- Choose handles that are easy to grasp.
- Choose controls that have clear markings, are easily manipulated, positioned within reach, and can be used without the risk of the user being burnt.
- An induction cook top may be desirable because the surface area around cooking zones remains cool to touch.
- Hotplates in a U-shape configuration allow pots to be reached safely.
- A microwave or convection/microwave may be quicker and safer to use than a conventional electric or gas oven. Check the ease of door opening.
- An oven with a side-opening door that opens away from the adjoining work surface assists a person to reach items on oven shelves and transfer them directly to the work surface.
- Oven racks that are designed to stop when pulled forward to their limit will not tip or fall out when items sitting on them are being handled.
- Consider a side-by-side refrigerator, or upside-down fridge/freezer for easy access to contents.
- The detergent dispenser in a conventional dishwasher should be within easy reach.

- The user needs to be able to undo the latch (which may be tight to ensure waterproof seal) in order to open a dishwasher.
- The door of the refrigerator, microwave and oven, should open in a direction which does not block movement within the room.
- Appliances that are simple to clean or have a self-cleaning or auto-defrost facility can be selected.
- Consider whether a gas or electric oven will be the safest and easiest type for the person to use.

Taps:

- A single-lever tap is easier to use than crossbar or knob type. Double-lever taps are available.
- Sensor taps may not be suitable if the kitchen is used by many people.

Sinks:

- The position and depth of the sink will be important for a user who is seated.
- The underside of the bowl and any exposed pipes beneath the sink should be insulated.
- Allow appropriate knee space under the basin for a wheelchair user.

More information

For further information, or advice, about any item contained in this information sheet, please contact Independent Living Centre Tasmania Inc.(ILCT):

- Call 1300 452 827 to speak to a health professional.
- Visit our website www.ilct.com.au or email info@ilct.com.au.
- ILCT visits communities around Tasmania. Contact ILCT to find out when we will be in your area.

ILCT provides Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Speech Pathology, and Allied Health Assistant services, on a fee-for-service basis. Our team delivers comprehensive assessments and support that may include assistive technology, home modifications, communication aids, and other tailored interventions to enhance independence and quality of life.

ILCT specifically provides supports to those aged over 18, who are Tasmanian residents and are of any culturally-diverse background. ILCT are a registered provider under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Independent Living Centre Tas Inc. (ILCT) acknowledges the generous support of the Tasmanian Government – Department of Health through the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program, and the Australian Government – Department of Health and Aged Care through the My Aged Care – Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP). Their ongoing contributions enable the continued provision of these information sheets and our information services.

Disclaimer

Independent Living Centre Tasmania Inc.(ILCT) is a not-for-profit organisation and does not sell, design, or manufacture equipment or products. Information provided by ILCT is intended as a general guide only, and may not be comprehensive, or up to date. Whilst every effort is made, to ensure accuracy, ILCT cannot guarantee that all information provided is correct. Any pricing information is indicative only and may be subject to change. Users should contact suppliers directly for current pricing and product availability. The inclusion of product or service information does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by ILCT. Individuals are responsible for making their own informed choices and are strongly encouraged to seek professional advice before selecting equipment or services. ILCT accepts no liability for any loss, damage, or injury arising from the selection, or use of products, or services, based on information provided. Users must always follow any professional advice received and the manufacturer's instructions for use.

© 2025 AQLAK-01



**Independent
Living Centre
Tasmania**