

Prevent falls and maintain your independence:

## Use grab bars!

Protecting yourself from a fall is important to maintain a healthy and independent lifestyle. The following information will help you learn more about the benefits of using bath and shower grab bars, and what to look for when buying and installing them.



### WHAT IS A GRAB BAR?

A grab bar is an accessory that can be used in bathtubs and shower stalls to reduce the risk of falling and injuring yourself when taking a bath or shower. A grab bar can be made of stainless steel, aluminum or plastic, and is available in a variety of shapes, sizes and colours.

### WHO SHOULD USE GRAB BARS?

Everyone! People of all ages and abilities can benefit from using grab bars.

### WHAT CAN A GRAB BAR DO FOR YOU?

Using a grab bar can reduce your risk of falling in the bathtub and shower.

There are two types of grab bars to choose from: wall mounted and portable.

A **wall mounted grab bar** can:

- help you steady yourself while stepping into and out of the bathtub or shower stall;
- help you safely lower and raise yourself into and up from the bottom of the bathtub.

A **portable grab bar** can help you steady yourself while stepping into and out of the bathtub.

A portable grab bar can be installed on the bathtub rim with minimal effort and is removable so you may take it with you when you travel or move.

FOR YOUR SAFETY: Portable grab bars are not designed to support your weight when sitting into or getting up from the bottom of the bathtub.

### HOW MANY GRAB BARS DO I NEED AND WHERE SHOULD THEY BE INSTALLED?

Because individual needs vary, you should talk to an occupational therapist to determine specifically where your grab bars would be most useful. A health care professional should be able to refer you to an occupational therapist.

**Research suggests that two grab bars in a bathtub are useful for most older adults:**

- at least one along the faucet wall
- one along the back wall

(see figure 1)

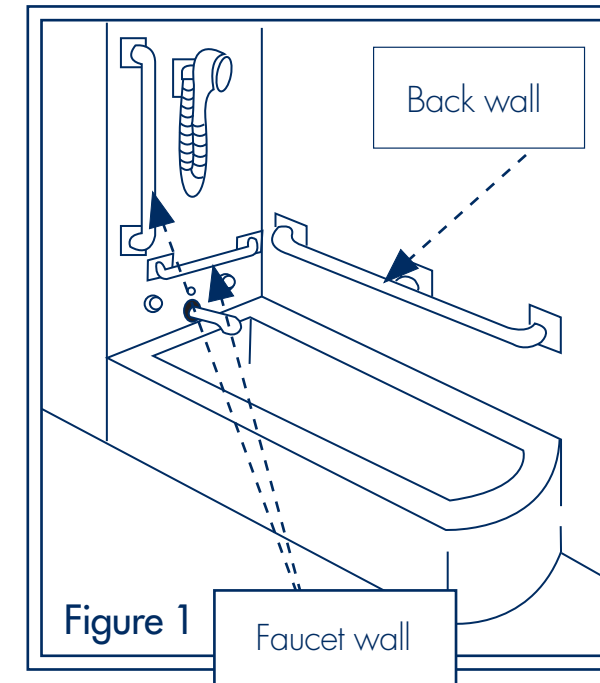


Figure 1  
If you have a shower stall, one grab bar installed near the entrance may be sufficient. (see figure 2)

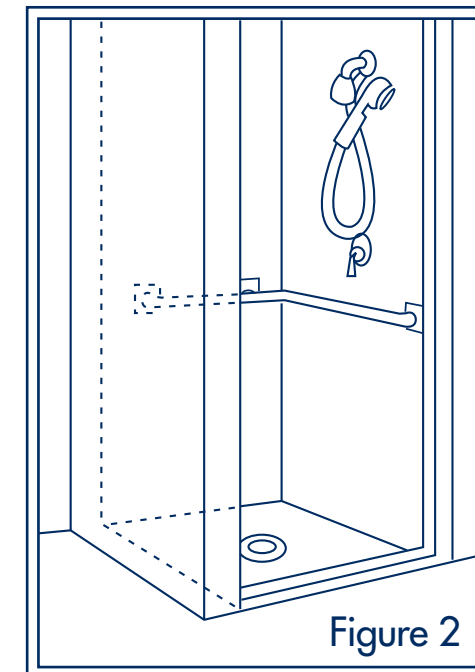


Figure 2

### THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING YOUR GRAB BAR(S)

#### 1) Choose a grab bar that will be safe for your weight.

Most grab bars will support the weight of a person up to 113 kg (250 lbs). Manufacturers will often list a specific weight limit on the grab bar packaging. If your weight exceeds this limit, you should be able to special order from your grab bar retailer.

#### 2) Choose a grab bar that is the correct length for your bath or shower area.

The distance between the studs in your bathtub or shower stall wall will determine the length of grab bar you require. (See other side for measuring instructions).

#### 3) Choose a grab bar that feels comfortable in your hand.

For adults, the recommended diameter of a grab bar is between 3 and 4.5 cm (1 1/4 and 1 3/4 inches). We recommend that you wrap your hand around the different sizes to find the one that fits in your hand most comfortably.

#### 4) Choose a grab bar with a textured surface.

We recommend that you choose a grab bar that has a textured non-slip surface – that is, a surface that has a rough finish where you are most likely to grab the bar. A rough finish will provide a better grip when the bar is wet.

## HOW TO MEASURE FOR YOUR WALL MOUNTED GRAB BAR(S):

Tip: Before going to the store, use a stud locator to measure the distance between the wall studs.

### Bathtub (see figure 3):

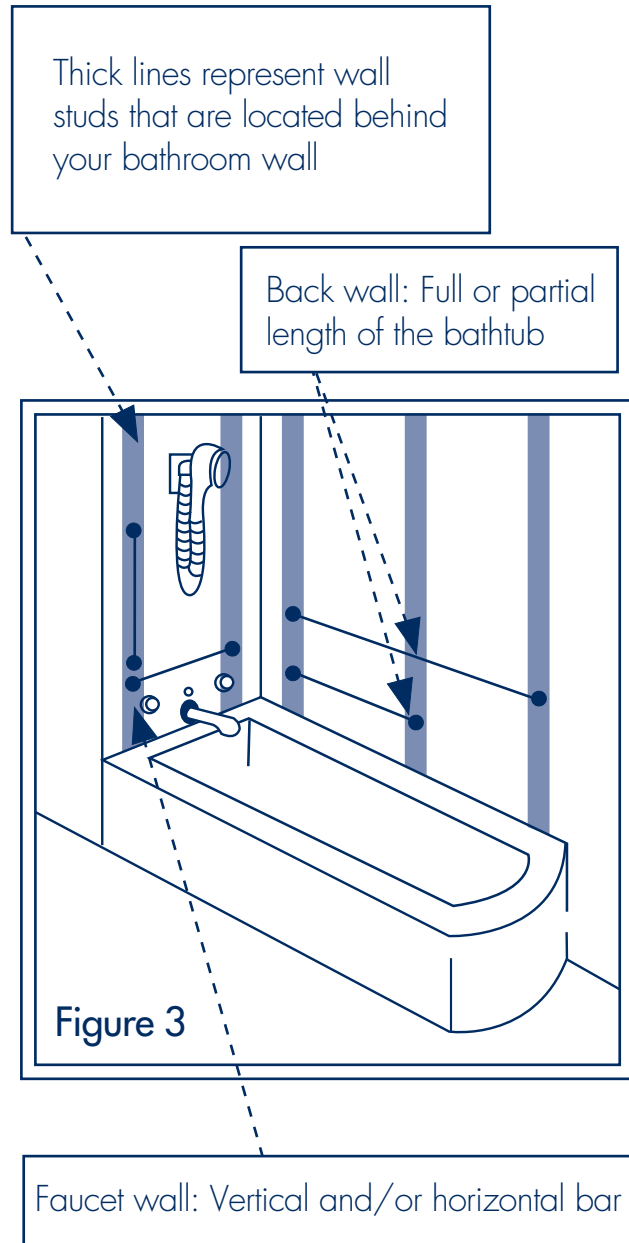
1) **Back wall:** Depending on your needs, you will require a grab bar that extends the full or partial length of your bathtub. Measure accordingly.

2) **Faucet wall:**

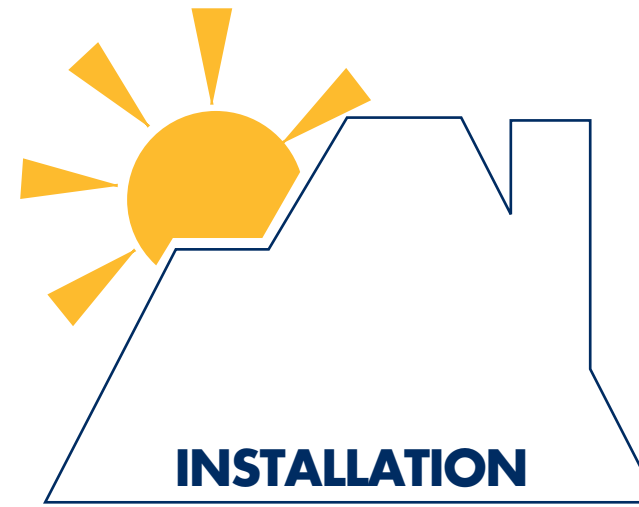
- **Horizontal bar:** Measure the full length of the faucet wall; outside stud to outside stud.
- **Vertical bar:** Vertical bars are installed along a single stud.

**Shower stall:** Measure the distance between the studs where you are planning to install your grab bar.

To be safe, your grab bar needs to be securely anchored into the wall studs.



Note: Wall stud spacing may vary.



**IMPORTANT:** Grab bars are safety supports only when installed properly and securely.

**Portable grab bar:**  
A portable grab bar can be installed by carefully following the instructions provided by the manufacturer.

Regularly check your portable grab bar to ensure that it is secure and tightly screwed on to the bathtub rim.

**Wall mounted grab bar:**  
We recommend that you hire a professional to install your wall mounted grab bar(s).

If you are qualified to install the grab bar(s) yourself, you should carefully follow the instructions provided by the manufacturer.

## INSTALLATION TIPS FOR WALL MOUNTED GRAB BARS:

- 1) **Installation height:** The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) recommends that a wall mounted grab bar be installed at a height of 18 to 28cm (7 to 11 inches) above the rim of the bathtub.
- 2) **FOR YOUR SAFETY:** If a grab bar is horizontally mounted, it should have a wall clearance of approximately 4.5 cm (1 3/4 inches) from the wall where the grab bar is mounted. This precaution will ensure that an individual won't catch his or her arm in the gap between the wall and the bar.
- 3) **Ceramic:** Ceramic tiles may be a concern when installing grab bars as they can crack very easily. A professional should be able to install grab bars in your ceramic tiles without damaging them.

## WHERE CAN I PURCHASE A GRAB BAR?

- Grab bars can be found at:
- hardware stores
  - home improvement stores
  - medical supply stores
  - department stores
  - select pharmacies

For your convenience, phone ahead to be certain that the grab bar you are looking for is available.

1 in 3 seniors fall each year.  
It could happen to you or someone you love.



*Assistive Devices to Help Prevent Falls.*  
A joint venture between the University of Ottawa and the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT).  
For more information about this project please contact the CAOT at **613-523-2268** or **www.caot.ca**

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