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To feel safe in everyday life- A study of older adults' experiences after home modification

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Introduction: Technology such as home modifications is assumed to improve older people's feelings of safety in everyday life. This relationship has however not been investigated in research from the older peoples own experiences.

Objectives: The aim of this study was therefore to explore aspects contributing to experiences of safety in everyday life for older adults receiving home modification services.

Methods: Qualitative interviews were conducted with eight older persons. Data were analyzed using a constant comparative approach and a hermeneutic interpretation.

Results: Three main categories emerged in the analysis; Prerequisites that enable a feeling of safety, Strategies that enable safety in everyday life and finally Use of and reliance on technology impacts on safety. The finding revealed that feeling safe in everyday life was founded on three aspects identified in this study as prerequisites; to feel healthy, to have someone to rely on and to feel at home. The fulfilment of these prerequisites impacted on the participants' strategies for handling problems in everyday life and also on the ability to use and benefit from technology such as home modifications.

Conclusion: Fulfilled prerequisites are fundamental aspects for older people to feel safe. The provision of technology such as home modifications and assistive devices does not improve safety unless the older person has fulfilled prerequisites.

Contribution to practice: The findings have important clinical implications for occupational therapists and other professionals working with older people in the home environment. In order to facilitate a safe everyday life the person first has to have prerequisites fulfilled. These prerequisites need to be given more attention in both occupational therapy assessment and interventions since they can be seen as a prerequisite for making use of other more traditional occupational therapy interventions, such as assistive devices and home modifications.