



A Guide to Selecting Grab Rails

Assistive technology (AT) is a piece of equipment, device or system that provides people with practical solutions to everyday life activities. You can search our National Equipment Database www.askned.com.au to view a range of products online.

Grab rails provide a safe way to change position, move freely around a building and access the environment. Correct installation is important to ensure the safety of the user and the effectiveness of the rail.

Construction

All rails should be of a single piece of material with no joins. This will provide the strongest product. The only join should be where flanges are welded on.

Material

Grab rails are available in a range of materials. It is important to choose the correct material for the environment. For example, consider heat, water, and electricity to ensure your safety. Stainless steel, aluminium, and galvanized tubing, are common materials that grab rails are fabricated from.

Types of Finish

The finish of a grab rail not only affects the aesthetics but also its function. A rail which is a contrasting colour to the wall background may benefit those with vision impairment.

The coating can also improve the grip of the handrail:

- Chrome or polished rails are hardwearing but can be slippery to hold especially when wet.
- Epoxy coating provides a warmer feel to rails, is hard wearing and will reduce the effects of condensation.
- Slip resistant textured finishes provide extra grip but may be uncomfortable for sensitive hands.

Length and Shape

The length and shape of the rail will be determined by its purpose and the client's abilities. An assessment by an occupational therapist will assist in determining the type of rail best suited for the environment. There are guidelines which illustrate recommended heights, angles and positioning of rails within buildings.

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Australian Standard

Australian Standard 1428.1 (2010) states that a grab rail must be between 30-50mm diameter and allow at least 60mm between it and the wall or mounting surface.

Mounting and Fixing

Most grab rails are designed to be fixed to a wall at two ends. This is so that they are strong enough to have weight put through them. Rails may swing or fold up to assist transfers. Temporary rails may be mounted either through suction or clamp systems. These should only be used on certain surfaces and should be checked regularly to ensure maximum grip. They should not be used for long term situations.

Installation

It is important to have rails installed by a trained professional. The structure of a building will influence how and where the rail can be attached.

Common installation options are:

Brick or cement wall: Can be safely attached in any position.

Timber frame wall: Rail must be fixed at each end to the wooden studs. If unable to place in desired position, consider:

- A longer rail or contacting a builder to reinforce wall area.
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Metal frame wall:

The rail must be fixed at each end of the metal studs. If these options are not possible, consider a rail mounted to the floor.



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