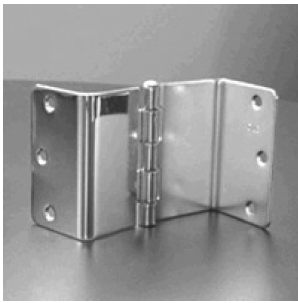




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TIP FOR WIDENING A DOORWAY *by Ben Lieman, Assistive Technologist*



Have you scrapped your knuckles recently going through a narrow doorway? What about the doorway itself? Is it getting chipped or dented as the wheelchair just fits through? Or are you avoiding some rooms because the wheelchair won't fit at all?

Off-set hinges might solve the problem.

As 'getting around' shifts from walking to wheels, access to the bathroom (and other rooms) becomes difficult. A standard manual wheelchair with large wheels in the back and small wheels in the front is on average 24-27" wide. Add an inch or two if you need to 'turn' into a room and you may require 29" or more. Hence, the current ADA standard is now 32" clear.

Since an average older bathroom doorway is 24-28" wide... Well, that's why sometimes you find yourself holding onto the wall or to someone else because that doorway is just too narrow. A transport chair is a narrower chair with four small wheels and can be a help in many situations. But turning into a room can make it difficult even with this narrower chair.

An alternate solution is the off-set hinge. No construction, just exchanging the current hinges with these new ones and placing them on the same door. If 2" will make a difference, they might be for you. Stand outside the doorway and take a look at the edge of the

of the door while open at 90 degrees. You can see the edge in the doorway. So actually a 24" doorway, is really a width of 22" because the edge of the door is also in the way.

Off-set hinges hold the door so that the door edge does not interfere with the width of the door. There are two issues to take into account when considering off-set hinges:

- 1) The swing of the door will extend 2" outward (wider than before), so you want to be sure the door will swing clear of the sink or tub.
- 2) Installing the off-set hinge requires 2-3" behind where the current hinge is. If the door is nestled into a corner, there may not be enough room.

You can order them on-line or find them in some hardware stores (be prepared for quizzical looks). Someone handy would need to remove the door, remove the current hinges, and then attach the new hinges to the doorframe and door.

For more information, contact Ben Lieman at the Greater New York Chapter at (212) 619-1400 or e-mail: blieman@als-ny.org

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