

## **Home safety tips**

### **Home Safety Checklist**

Download, print and keep the checklist handy to prevent dangerous situations and help maximize the person living with dementia's independence for as long as possible.

#### **Download**

- Evaluate your environment. A person living with dementia may be more prone to safety hazards in certain areas of the home or outdoors. Monitor garages, work rooms, basements and outside areas, where there are more likely to be tools, chemicals, cleaning supplies and other potentially hazardous items.
- Avoid safety hazards in the kitchen. Use appliances that have an automatic shut-off feature. Prevent unsafe stove usage by applying stove knob covers, removing knobs or turning off the gas when the stove is not in use. Disconnect the garbage disposal. Discard toxic plants and decorative fruits that may be mistaken for real food. Remove vitamins, prescription drugs, sugar substitutes and seasonings from the kitchen table and counters.
- Be prepared for emergencies. Keep a list of emergency phone numbers and addresses for local police and fire departments, hospitals and poison control helplines.
- Make sure safety devices are in working order. Make sure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors and fire

extinguishers are available and inspected regularly. Replace batteries twice a year during daylight saving time.

- Install locks out of sight. Place a latch or deadbolt either above or below eye level on all doors. Remove locks on interior doors to prevent the person living with dementia from locking themselves in. Keep an extra set of keys hidden near the door for easy access.
- Keep walkways and rooms well-lit. Changes in levels of light can be disorienting. Create an even level by adding extra lights in entries, outside landings, and areas between rooms, stairways and bathrooms. Use night lights in hallways, bedrooms and bathrooms.
- Consider removing guns and other weapons from the home or storing them in a locked cabinet. If someone in the home is living with Alzheimer's or another dementia, firearms can pose a significant risk for everyone. For example, as the disease progresses, the person may not recognize someone he or she has known for years and view him or her as an intruder. With a gun accessible, the result could be disastrous.
- Place medications in a locked drawer or cabinet. To help ensure that medications are taken safely, use a pill box organizer or keep a daily list and check off each medication as it is taken.
- Remove tripping hazards. Remove throw rugs, extension cords and excessive clutter.
- Watch the temperature of water and food. It may be difficult for the person living with dementia to tell the difference

between hot and cold. Consider installing an automatic thermometer for water temperature.

- Assess bedroom safety. Closely monitor the use of an electric blanket, heater or heating pad to prevent burns or other injuries. Provide seating near the bed to help with dressing. Ensure closet shelves are at an accessible height so that items are easy to reach, which may prevent the person from climbing shelves or objects falling from overhead.
- Secure large furniture. Check that book shelves, cabinets or large TVs are secured to prevent tipping. Ensure chairs have armrests to provide support when going from a sitting to standing position.
- Avoid injury in the bathroom. Install grab bars for the shower, tub and toilet to provide additional support. Apply textured stickers to slippery surfaces to prevent falls. Consider installing a walk-in shower.
- Improve laundry room safety. Keep all cleaning products — such as liquid laundry pacs and bleach — out of sight, secured and in the original (not decorative) storage containers to discourage someone from eating or touching harmful chemicals. Consider installing safety locks on washing machines and dryers to prevent inappropriate items being put in or taken out too early. Clean out lint screens and dryer ducts regularly to prevent fires.
- Assess safety hazards in the garage and/or basement. Limit access to large equipment such as lawn mowers, weed trimmers or snow blowers. Keep poisonous

chemicals, such as gasoline or paint thinner, out of reach. Install a motion sensor on the garage door.

- Support the person's needs. Try not to create a home that feels too restrictive. The home should encourage independence and social interaction. Clear areas for activities.