



Making your home dementia friendly



Introduction

If you have dementia, living at home gives you more independence and also means you can continue to enjoy your own familiar environment.

The right home environment can help you to stay safe, physically active and also provide prompts to keep you mentally stimulated and in touch with friends and family.

This booklet describes some of the ways to create a home environment that supports you as a person with dementia, and doesn't become confusing or restrict you.

The booklet is divided into different sections covering different aspects of living at home. Each of these areas includes an explanation of why it is important and lists some practical, quick and easy things you can do to make your home more dementia friendly. We also list some things you might want to think about later on, as your dementia progresses. For some of these you may need help and support from friends, family members or health and social care professionals.

Everyone experiences dementia in their own way. You may need to try some of the ideas out to see what works best for you.

This booklet will be useful for people with dementia who want to remain living at home, and for friends and family members who are supporting them. It is based on research, and the personal experiences of people with dementia and the people who support them (family, friends and care professionals).



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1

Lighting

Why this is important

Good lighting helps you see clearly and make sense of where you are. As you get older you may find that you need a lot more light than before to be able to see properly. You should have your eyes tested regularly.

Daylight coming through the windows will help you stay aware of the time of day and the weather. Improved lighting can prevent dark areas and shadows on the floor, which can be confusing. Reflective glare from windows, computer screens and TVs can cause confusion. Dimmer switches will give you more control over lighting. Keeping your bedroom dark will help you sleep better.



Practical tips

- Check that curtains or blinds, furniture, TVs or plants are not blocking natural light coming through the windows.
- Get the windows cleaned regularly.
- Use brighter bulbs in light fittings, if it is safe to do so, or use extra lights.
- Make sure that the bedroom can be made dark at night.
- To make sure you can see the TV, adjust the settings, move other light sources such as lamps, or change the TV position to reduce glare.



2

Flooring

Why this is important

It is very easy to trip over uneven floors or mats. Changes in the colour of the floor from room to room, rugs or dark floor mats can sometimes look like something you need to step over. Shiny floors can look wet or slippery and speckles in flooring may look like litter. You will be able to walk more confidently and safely over plain matt flooring. The colour of the floor, particularly on stairs, should contrast with the walls. It may be best to avoid floor colours that might be confused with real things, such as blue looking like water or green looking like grass.



Practical tips

- Remove floor mats and rugs as they can cause trips and falls.
- Check that cables for lights and other appliances are not a trip hazard.

Further suggestions

- Make sure that floor mats between rooms are a similar colour to the flooring, as well as any carpet edging or cover strips holding the carpet down.
- Where possible lay plain-coloured matt flooring throughout the home.
- Indicate the edges of stairs with brightly-coloured tape or paint.



3

Furniture and furnishings

Why this is important

Dementia may affect how well you can tell the difference between colours. It may also affect how you see objects in three dimensions. Using bright and contrasting colours for furniture and furnishings helps everybody see things more easily. Contrast the colours of furniture, including beds, tables, chairs and lamps with the walls and floor.

Stripes or strong patterns can be confusing and disorientating. Paintings or other artwork could be misinterpreted as dementia progresses and you may not recognise your reflection in a mirror.



Practical tips

- Check pictures and mirrors and cover or remove them if they are likely to cause confusion.
- Use plain, brightly coloured bed and table linen that contrasts with the walls and floor.

Further suggestions

- Make sure the colour of the switches for lights and appliances contrasts with the wall.
- Replace furnishings that have stripes or strong patterns.
- Use furniture and plain coloured furnishings that contrast with the walls and floors so that they can be easily seen.
- Choose items to help with orientation, such as a house plant to show the way to the garden.



4

Knowing where things are

Why this is important

If you have memory problems you may forget where things are kept. Visual cues such as putting pictures or labels on the outside of cupboards, wardrobes and drawers can help with this. They can also help you make sense of the home generally. Open shelves or transparent doors will make it easier for you to find things. Appliances should be easy to find and not hidden behind cupboard doors. It is also important that you know where things you use every day are, and that you can find them easily.



Practical tips

- Always keep your keys, glasses and mobile phone (if you use one) in the same place.
- Label cupboards and drawers with pictures or text telling you what is inside.
- Make sure appliances are easy to find.

Further suggestions

- Take the doors off cupboards and wardrobes if it is safe to do this.
- Fit cupboards with non-reflective, transparent and shatterproof fronts so you can see inside.
- Leave the bathroom door open when not in use so you can easily see the toilet.



5

Eating and drinking

Why this is important

Eating and drinking well is important for your health. However, you may find that you have a reduced appetite, lose your interest in preparing meals or do not eat at usual mealtimes. You may also find it difficult to see white food on a white plate or a white plate on a white table.



Practical tips

- Make sure the items you use every day are easy to find.
- Use brightly coloured cloths, towels and kitchen rolls that contrast with surfaces and appliances.
- Ensure that appliances such as kettles can be seen and are easy to use.
- Use coloured crockery that contrasts with the food you are going to eat, as well as the table or tablecloth.

Further suggestions

- Use clear plastic containers to store food so that you can see what is inside.
- If you need to replace equipment or appliances, like a kettle, try and make sure they're the same design or model as the old one, so you can remember how to use them.



6

Using the bathroom

Why this is important

Not being able to find the toilet when you need it can cause anxiety. The toilet seat and lid should be in a contrasting colour to the rest of the toilet so they are easier to see. Rails in a different colour to the walls, traditional-style or lever taps that are marked hot and cold, easy-to-use basin, bath and shower controls and a traditional toilet flush will also be more obvious. Bathrooms can get crowded with items that you do not use every day and this can be distracting.



Practical tips

- Put away any items that are causing clutter on surfaces.
- Use towels and toilet rolls in contrasting colours to the wall, to make them easier to see.
- Put a sign with a picture of a toilet and the word 'toilet' on the door at a height where you can see it easily.
- Try leaving the bathroom light on during the night.
- Consider removing the toilet lid.

Further suggestions

- Ensure that toilet, bath and shower switches and controls are of familiar design and easy to use.
- Use a flood prevention plug in the basin and the bath.
- Change any door locks so that they can be easily opened in an emergency.
- Remove the wastepaper bin if it might be mistaken for the toilet.



7 Keeping things in order

Why this is important

Clutter around the home may make you feel confused and distracted. It may also make it difficult for you to find things. Items left on the floor can lead to trips and falls. Noise and other distractions can make concentration difficult, so try to reduce these as much as possible. Turn off the TV or radio when you are not watching or listening to them.



Practical tips

- Remove excess clutter and unused items (such as old newspapers) but keep enough so that the space feels personal.
- Consider having a basket or tray for important paperwork.
- Make sure that cupboards and drawers are tidy so it is easy to find things.
- Remove any unnecessary cushions or throws.
- Try to reduce background noise.
- Put things back where they belong when you have finished with them.

Further suggestions

- Buy more cupboards if you need more space to store things.
- Put up extra open shelves if needed.



8

Keeping safe

Why this is important

Feeling safe and confident in your home is very important if you are living on your own. There are different types of grab rails, alarms and sensors, including smoke detectors, that can be installed to help you stay safe at home.

Professionals, for example occupational therapists, the fire and rescue service, or home improvement agencies can help you make your home safe. It's also important to keep your home at an appropriate temperature throughout the seasons to prevent you getting too hot or too cold.



Practical tips

- Lock away any potentially hazardous or sharp items.
- Make sure the TV and radio are switched off if not in use.
- Check your thermostat settings as the weather changes.
- Reduce the temperature of hot water to avoid scalds.
- Make sure ICE (in case of emergency) numbers are near your telephone.

Further suggestions

- Consider using socket covers if sockets are not being used.
- Get gas or electric fires checked for safety.
- Check that door handles and locks are easy to see and use.
- Consider installing grab rails on stairs or along long walls.



9

Keeping active and engaged

Why this is important

Keeping active and engaged can really improve your quality of life, so making sure that you can still enjoy doing your favourite things and stay in contact with people is important. A clock and calendar will help you remember the time and date so you don't miss appointments or events.



Practical tips

- Make sure items like puzzles, photographs or books are easy to find.
- Make sure you can see a large-faced clock and calendar.
- Check the telephone is easy to use.
- Put a photo of a friend or family member next to their telephone number, to help you remember who to call.

Further suggestions

- Put a whiteboard where you can see it easily, so you can write reminders of things you need to do.
- Make sure you have some chairs with arms, as they are much easier to get out of.



10 Getting outside

Why this is important

Being able to see and get outside throughout the year can improve your wellbeing. Gardening or enjoying nature can be very therapeutic. If your front door is easy to recognise, this will help prevent you from feeling disorientated.



Practical tips

- Take opportunities to get outdoors throughout the year.
- Make sure you can see the outside through your windows. Place a chair (and table if needed) so that you can sit and watch what's happening outside.
- If you have plants inside or outside, remove any that are poisonous or spiky.

Further suggestions

- Check that the front door is easy to tell apart from the others in the road or block.
- Make sure that the door lock and keys are easy to use.
- Check that any paving or steps are safe and even.
- Make sure that there is somewhere sheltered to sit outside where you can rest.





Visitors to your home

If you have been using some of the ideas in this booklet, it is important that family members, friends and care workers who may visit you at home understand that you have arranged your home so that it is a safe and supportive environment.


Ask them not to move your furniture or sort out your cupboards unless you are sure you want this done. If you do, make sure you do this together so you can remember where things go.



Ask them to put back any items they have taken out of cupboards or off shelves. Make sure they return furniture to its proper place before they leave.

Checklist



This checklist is designed to help you remember some of the main changes you can put in place to make your home more dementia friendly. You can also use it to keep track of what you have already done, and make your own notes about other steps you may want to take.

Don't feel you need to complete everything on this checklist. It's important to remember that everyone experiences dementia differently. Make the changes you think will work best for you.

Changes to make	Tick if you're going to make this change	Date you made the change
 <p>Lighting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Check that nothing is blocking the windows and that they are clean.■ Use brighter bulbs or extra lights.■ Make sure the bedroom can be made dark at night.■ Make adjustments to reduce reflective glare from the TV.		

Changes to make	Tick if you're going to make this change	Date you made the change
 <p>Flooring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remove rugs and lay plain matt flooring. ■ Check that flexes are not a trip hazard. ■ Make sure carpet edging and cover strips are a similar colour to the flooring. ■ Outline edges of stairs. 		
 <p>Furniture and furnishings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Check that furniture and furnishings contrast with the walls and floors, and don't have stripes or strong patterns. ■ Use bright, contrasting linen. ■ Make sure light switches contrast with the wall. ■ Check if mirrors or pictures may be confusing. 		

Changes to make	Tick if you're going to make this change	Date you made the change
 <p>Knowing where things are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Always keep keys and glasses in the same place.■ Label cupboards and drawers.■ Make appliances easy to find.■ Put transparent fronts on cupboards and wardrobes, or remove doors.		
 <p>Eating and drinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Make frequently used items and appliances easy to find and use.■ Use bright cloths and towels.■ Use crockery that contrasts with your food and with the table.■ Use clear plastic containers for storage.		

Changes to make	Tick if you're going to make this change	Date you made the change
 <p>Using the bathroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use a coloured toilet seat. ■ Put a sign on the door to remind you where the toilet is. ■ Use a flood-safe plug. ■ Make sure controls and the door lock are familiar and easy to use. 		
 <p>Keeping things in order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remove clutter including unnecessary cushions and throws. ■ Consider a basket or tray for paperwork. ■ Keep shelves and cupboards tidy. ■ Get extra cupboards and shelves. ■ Reduce background TV or radio noise. 		

Changes to make	Tick if you're going to make this change	Date you made the change
 Keeping safe <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Lock away hazardous items.■ Check water temperature and thermostat settings.■ Check gas or electric fires for safety.■ Consider installing grab rails.		
 Keeping active and involved <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Keep doing the things you enjoy.■ Keep things you use often close at hand.■ Make sure you can see a clock and calendar.■ Check the telephone is easy to use. Use a photo of a friend or family member to remind you to call them.		

Changes to make	Tick if you're going to make this change	Date you made the change
 <p>Getting outside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Take opportunities to go outside all year round and make sure you can see outside. ■ Have a sheltered area outside where you can sit and rest. ■ Remove spiky or poisonous plants. ■ Make sure your front door is distinctive and you can use the lock. ■ Check any paving and steps are safe. 		

Other useful organisations

There are a number of organisations that provide further information, support or advice that may help you live well at home. You may need to find the contact details of these organisations in your area. This section tells you where you should be able to find these details, and has space for you to write them down.

Age UK

0800 169 65 65

www.ageuk.org.uk/about-us/local-partners

Local Age UKs provide a range of services to older people, including information and advice, home help, and IT and other training. You can find your local Age UK using the contact details above.

Local contact details:

DSDC (Dementia Services Development Centre)

www.dementia.stir.ac.uk

International centre providing resources including online guides and print publications on design solutions for people living with dementia.

Local council

www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council

The social services department can arrange community support and social care to help you live as independently as possible.

Local contact details:

Fire and rescue service

01827 302300

www.cfoa.org.uk/frs

This service can provide free home safety visits. They offer advice about how to make your home safer, as well as fitting smoke alarms and planning escape routes.

Local contact details:

GP

www.nhs.uk/service-search

The GP can refer you to other health and social care professionals who may be able to help you live well at home, for example an occupational therapist.

Local contact details:

Trust Mark

0333 555 1234

www.trustmark.org.uk

Scheme for trades in and around the home. You can search for a local tradesperson on the website.

Local contact details:

Home Improvement Agencies

0300 124 0315

www.findmyhia.org.uk

www.findmyhia.org.uk/findhandyperson

Home improvement and handyperson service providers are local organisations dedicated to helping older people, people with disabilities, and vulnerable people to live in safety and with dignity in their own homes.

Local contact details:

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www.kingsfund.org.uk

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www.worcester.ac.uk/dementia

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- **WE Care and Repair, Bristol**
- **United Kingdom Homecare Association (UKHCA)**

This booklet can be downloaded from our website at alzheimers.org.uk/dementiafriendlyhome

Sources are available on request.

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Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading dementia charity. We provide information and support, improve care, fund research, and create lasting change for people affected by dementia.

If you have any concerns about Alzheimer's disease or any other form of dementia, visit [alzheimers.org.uk](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk) or call the **Alzheimer's Society National Dementia Helpline** on **0300 222 1122**. (Interpreters are available in any language. Calls may be recorded or monitored for training and evaluation purposes.)

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