



# CREATING A SUPPORTIVE HOME

People living with dementia can experience their world as confusing, disorienting and, at worst, disabling and even dangerous. A well set up or designed environment, planned with impaired thinking skills in mind, can help maintain abilities and provide meaningful engagement by providing essential prompts, accessibility and reduce risks to support a person with dementia.

## DESIGNING A SUCCESSFUL ACTION PLAN

**Assess the home:** Look at the home with consideration of the patient with dementia. What objects could cause injury? Identify areas of possible danger.

**Focus on adapting rather than teaching:** Rather than trying to retrain an elder about safety, identify possible risks and take preventive precautions.

**Simplify the activities:** Most accidents, especially in the area of personal care, occur when an elder is rushed. Break up activities into simple step-by-step tasks, allowing the individual plenty of time to complete them. Give extra help with tasks that have become particularly difficult.

**Support the individual:** Avoid creating a home that feels too restrictive. The home should encourage independence, social interaction, and meaningful activities.

**Be realistic:** It's impossible to prevent every problem. Rely on common sense while paying close attention to objects or activities that could be dangerous.

## ASSESS THE HOME

- Bedrooms
- Bathrooms
- Windows
- Outdoors
- Furniture
- Lighting
- Kitchen
- Garage
- Basement

## BEDROOMS

- Remove small rugs or carpeting.
- Remove clutter.
- Remove furniture that could be a hazard.
- Have adequate lighting.
- Remove bed-frame if the bed is too high.
- Install rails on the bed.
- Purchase bumpers to surround the bed.
- Install reverse locks on doors.
- Buy room darkening blinds or shades.
- Use a monitor to listen to activity.
- Install nightlights.

## OUTDOORS

- Put away the garden hose.
- Remove all chemicals.
- Put away barbecue equipment, garden, and power tools.
- Install fences.

## THE KITCHEN

- Lock up sharp objects, knives, possible glassware.
- Lock up poisons, chemicals, detergents.
- Cover stove burners, remove knobs, install shut off valves.
- Unplug or put away appliances such as blenders, food processors, irons.
- Disconnect garbage disposal.
- Put locks on cabinets.
- Keep garbage out of sight and reach
- Have small snacks accessible for easy access.
- Make sure electrical cords are not dangling near water.

## THE BATHROOM

- Install grab rails in the tub, shower and near the toilet.
- Buy bathmats and/or non-slip decals.
- Replace glass shower doors with unbreakable plastic.
- Lock up razors, medications and sharp objects.
- Buy handheld shower head.
- Use a colored toilet seat that contrasts with the toilet.
- Remove small rugs and clutter.
- Have toilet paper easily visible and reachable.
- Place nightlight in the room.

## TIPS

- Reduce unhelpful stimulation.
- Leave in clear sight key objects the person with dementia may wish to use (e.g. toothbrush).
- Ensure adequate lighting.
- Ensure that grab rails are securely fixed to the wall.
- Ensure that surfaces, especially on the floor, are non-slip.
- Use a hand-held shower to make assisting with showers easier.
- Keep the door open and ensure unobstructed sight lines from the bed to the toilet.
- Ensure that doors are unlockable from the outside, in case the person with dementia has a fall, or is unable to unlock the door themselves.
- Create a bathroom that is warm, inviting and also safe. Use warm colors to make the space more inviting, and to give the impression of a warmer temperature.
- Use a colored toilet seat that contrasts with the toilet, to ensure that it can be seen easily.
- Choose grab rails that are of a clear contrasting color to the wall.
- Allow for the door handle to be located easily, by ensuring that the color of the door handle contrasts with the color of the door.
- Remove or lock up harmful objects.
- Remove clutter.
- Remove poisonous houseplants.
- Remove or cover mirrors.
- Put child-proof plugs in outlets.
- Remove firearms, matches, and lighters.
- Have emergency phone numbers and medical information handy.
- Have a first aid kit easily accessible.
- Put important phone numbers in large print next to the phone.
- Make sure phone cord is not a tripping hazard.
- Have working smoke alarms.
- Be aware of potentially dangerous areas.