

Safety

Safety is important for everyone, but the need for a comprehensive safety plan is particularly important for a person with Alzheimer's as the disease progresses. Taking measures to improve safety can prevent injuries and help a person with dementia feel more relaxed, less overwhelmed and maintain his or her independence longer.

Beware of dangerous objects and substances

Even the most basic appliances or household objects can become dangerous.

- Use appliances with an auto shut-off feature. Keep them away from water sources.
- Install a hidden gas valve or circuit breaker on the stove so a person with dementia cannot turn it on. Or, consider removing the knobs from the burners.
- Store grills, lawn mowers, power tools, knives and cleaning products in a secure place.
- 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. Medications should be kept in a locked area at all times.
- Supervise the use of tobacco and alcohol. Both may have harmful side effects and may interact dangerously with some medications.
- Make sure any firearms are locked up or removed them from the living space.

Avoid injury during daily activities

Most accidents in the home occur during activities like eating, bathing and using the restroom.

- Check the temperature of water and food — it may be difficult to decipher between hot and cold.
- Install walk-in showers and grab bars in the shower or tub to allow for independent, safe movement.
- Add textured stickers to slippery surfaces. Apply adhesives to keep throw rugs and carpeting in place, or remove rugs completely.

Prevent wandering or getting lost

More than 60 percent of those with dementia will wander or get lost. If not found within 24 hours, up to half of wandering individuals will suffer serious injury or death.

Signs of wandering include:

- Returning from a regular walk or drive later than usual.
- Trying to fulfill former obligations, such as going to work.
- Trying to “go home,” even when at home.
- Acting restless, pacing or making repetitive movements.
- Having difficulty locating familiar places like the bathroom, bedroom or dining room.
- Acting as if doing a hobby or chore, but nothing gets done.
- Acting nervous or anxious in crowded areas, such as shopping malls or restaurants.

Tips to reduce wandering:

- Engage the person in structured, meaningful activities throughout the day.

- Make sure the person gets enough exercise, which can help reduce anxiety, agitation and restlessness.
- Place deadbolts either high or low on exterior doors.
- Ensure all basic needs are met (e.g., toileting, nutrition, thirst).
- Carry out daily activities, such as folding laundry or preparing dinner.
- Provide reassurance if the person feels lost, abandoned or disoriented.
- Control access to car keys (wandering does not just occur by foot).
- Avoid busy places that can be confusing and disorienting (e.g., shopping malls).
- Do not leave the person unsupervised in new surroundings.

Keep important documents on hand

- Doctors' names and contact information.
- A list of current medications and dosages.
- Contact information for police and fire departments, hospitals and poison control.
- A list of food or drug allergies.
- Copies of legal papers (e.g., living will, advance directives, power of attorney).
- Names and contact information for emergency contacts.
- Insurance information (e.g., policy number, member name).

Resources

Visit the Alzheimer's Association online Safety Center at alz.org/safety or call **800.272.3900** to learn more and access safety information, services and resources, such as:

- MedicAlert® + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return®.
- Alzheimer's Association Comfort Zone®, powered by Omnilink.
- Alzheimer's Association Dementia and Driving Resource Center.

Our mission

To eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

Our vision

A world without Alzheimer's disease®.