

Is the Individual Able to Live Alone

Living day to day with Alzheimer's disease requires a delicate balance between a person's independence and his or her safety. This balance is difficult to maintain when the person with AD lives alone and you, the caregiver, have to monitor the safety of this living arrangement. If you are living with the person it can also be difficult to decide whether or not the person with AD can stay at home alone while you are out of the house.

Before making any change, caregivers first need to evaluate how well the individual with AD handles daily tasks. It is important to directly observe the person performing these routine activities. Do not rely on the person's report because it may not truly reflect the problem at hand.

Use the following questions to help determine how well the person with AD is functioning independently and to identify safety concerns. Some of the questions only apply if the person is actually living by themselves rather than being left alone while the caregiver is out. Use these questions as a guide and only use the ones that apply to your situation. A person with one or more problems within each category may indicate a need for more supervision, support or a change in living arrangements.

Safety concerns

Does your loved one:	Yes	No
Have driving accidents, even minor ones?	_____	_____
Get lost driving or walking?	_____	_____
Burn pots on the stove or forget to turn off the burners or oven?	_____	_____
Forget to extinguish cigarettes?	_____	_____
Let strangers into the house or lock him/herself out often?	_____	_____
Forget to secure the house at night or when going out?	_____	_____
Demonstrate mood swings and paranoid behaviors?	_____	_____
Leave the house and get lost?	_____	_____
Know there are firearms or dangerous tools in the house and know how to use them safely?	_____	_____
Know how to use the thermostat and judge temperature correctly?	_____	_____
Know what to do in the case of an emergency?	_____	_____
Have a recent history of being the victim of con games, scams or a crime?	_____	_____

Personal Care

Is the Person Able to:	Yes	No
Eat well-balanced meals and drink plenty of fluids?	_____	_____
Dress appropriately for the weather?	_____	_____
Bathe and use the toilet when needed?	_____	_____

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continued

Other tasks

Is the Person Able to:	Yes	No
Keep up with housekeeping duties and home repairs?	_____	_____
Pay bills on time, balance checkbook and use credit cards?	_____	_____
Shop for, store and cook food correctly?	_____	_____
Use the phone, handle an answering machine and remember important phone numbers?	_____	_____
Take medication on time and in the right amount?	_____	_____
Recite their current address and phone number?	_____	_____

If your loved one is still safe at this time please remember to frequently and regularly reevaluate due to the nature of the disease. Any sudden changes in ability could indicate a potential health problem. Consult a health professional when necessary. There are various options to consider if your loved one is not safe alone. The Alzheimer's Association staff can discuss specific situations and concerns with you.

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6/20/18

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The Heart of America Chapter provides programs and services in 66 counties in Kansas and Missouri. These programs and services are made possible thanks to generous donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations. Contributions and donations allow the Chapter to provide supportive services, including care consultations, free of charge to individuals and families.