

Safety Concerns for People with Dementia

Not all memory loss is due to dementia. Memory loss and/or confusion may be a result of many conditions, some of which are reversible. If you or someone you know has memory loss or confusion that's getting worse, it's important to talk with a health care professional about it. If it does turn out to be dementia, there are steps you can take to live well, and plan for a future with it.

Dementia affects each person differently, but symptoms typically include increasing memory loss, confusion, and disorientation. Changes in the brain can also impact how individuals interpret what they see, hear, feel, taste or smell, and their sense of time, place and judgment – each of which can impact safety.

The best environment for a person with memory loss or dementia is one that helps them feel as independent and supported as possible. For people with dementia wanting to stay at home, it's key to find the right balance between independence and safety - and to anticipate changes. With creativity and flexibility, it's possible to make adaptations that make the home safer and less stressful for all.

This "info kit" is a resource for family members and caregivers to assist in evaluating the home and taking steps to promote safety over the course of dementia. Materials highlight information and tips related to the following:

- 1. Home Safety
- 2. Falls Prevention
- 3. Driving
- 4. Wandering
- 5. Emergency Preparedness
- 6. Elder Abuse & Financial Exploitation



You may click on the links provided below each resource to view or print the information yourself. When a computer icon appears, the information is intended to be viewed online, and not in a printable format.

**IT'S HELPFUL TO PLAN AHEAD, AND PUT SAFETY MEASURES IN PLACE BEFORE
THEY'RE REALLY NEEDED**

1. HOME SAFETY

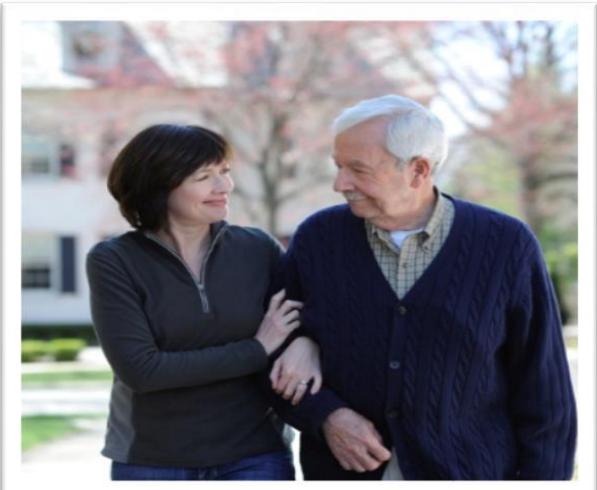
- **Alzheimer's Caregiving Tips, Home Safety** (National Institutes on Aging, 2017)
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/publication/home-safety>
A webpage that covers the topic of home safety, offering tips on basic safety for every room, moving around the house and minimizing danger. Includes information about impairment for each sense - sight, smell, touch, hear, and taste - and how this may affect safety in the home.
- **Home Safety for People with Alzheimer's Disease** (National Institutes on Aging, 2017)
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/home-safety-checklist-alzheimers-disease>
A webpage for those who provide in-home care for people with cognitive impairment, Alzheimer's, or other dementias. It includes checklists for each room in the home to create a safer environment.
- **Alzheimer's and Home Safety - Webpage** (Alzheimer's Association)
<http://www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-safety.asp>
This webpage contains information on how dementia affects safety, and provides home safety tips. It includes a home safety checklist for the rooms in a house.
- **This Caring Home, Home Safety Virtual Home - Webpage** (This Caring Home)
<https://www.thiscaringhome.org/> Follow this link and select "Home Safety" to see options.
This webpage shows online research-based solutions to home safety and daily care issues. It offers information, visual diagrams and examples of products to promote safety in the bathroom, bedroom, kitchen, living/dining rooms, stairs and outdoors.

2. FALLS PREVENTION

- **Reducing Risk of Falls for People with Dementia** (Alzheimer Society of Manitoba, 2014)
<http://alzheimer.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2014-Dementia-Fall-Risk-Checklist-template.pdf>
This website shares the many reasons why people with dementia are at increased risk for falls. It also offers suggestions to increase safety in the physical environment.
- **Falls and Older Adults – Webpage** (NIH Senior Health, National Institute on Aging, 2017)
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/prevent-falls-and-fractures>
This webpage offers information about the increased risk of falls with aging and tips for making personal changes, fall-proofing your home and maintaining bone health. While not dementia specific, it offers useful information and considerations for all older adults.

3. DRIVING

- **Driving Information and Contract** (Alzheimer's Association, 2015)
<https://www.alz.org/media/documents/alzheimers-dementia-driving-info-contract-ts.pdf>
Brief fact sheet that covers the need to plan for driving retirement, tips to help the person with dementia to cope with this change and for families of those who are reluctant/refusing to give up driving. It offers a “contract” which could be developed early in the disease process to encourage discussion and planning for driving decisions as the disease progresses.
- **At the Crossroads: Family Conversations about Alzheimer's, Dementia and Driving**
(The Hartford Financial Services Group, 2010)
https://s0.hfdstatic.com/sites/the_hartford/files/cmme-crossroads.pdf
This guide helps families determine when it is time for loved ones with dementia to stop driving, and helps them cope with stopping driving.
- **Dementia and Driving Resource Center - Webpage** (Alzheimer's Association)
<http://www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-and-driving.asp>
This webpage contains information on dementia, its impacts on driving, and signs of unsafe driving. It also offers tips and video examples on “having the conversation” with a loved one.
- **Safe Driving for a Life Time: Your Road Ahead - A Guide to Comprehensive Driving Evaluations**
(The Hartford Center for Mature Market Excellence, 2016)
https://s0.hfdstatic.com/sites/the_hartford/files/your-road-ahead-2012.pdf
This guide offers general information for those seeking information about comprehensive driving evaluations. The websites below identify professionals who can provide this type of evaluation.
 - https://myaota.aota.org/driver_search/index.aspx
 - <https://www.aded.net/page/725>*Or, try contacting your local hospital or the Alzheimer's Association to see if they know of driving evaluation professionals near you.*



4. WANDERING

- **Alzheimer's Caregiving Tips, Wandering** (National Institute on Aging, 2017)
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/wandering-and-alzheimers-disease>
This webpage offers information on wandering – what you can do to prevent it as well as promote safety and a quick return if your loved one does wander away from home.
- **MedicAlert Foundation, in collaboration with the Alzheimer's Association**
<http://www.alz.org/care/dementia-medic-alert-safe-return.asp>
Provides membership plans with 24/7 wandering support. This nationwide emergency response service facilitates the safe return of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia who wander or have a medical emergency.

5. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS (Be ready for fires, floods, and/or earthquakes!)

- **Alzheimer's Caregiving Tips, Disaster Preparedness** (National Institute on Aging, 2017)
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/disaster-preparedness-alzheimers-caregivers>
This fact sheet covers the topic of preparing for disasters such as severe weather, fires, floods, earthquakes and other emergency situations. It shares information on gathering supplies, what to do if you must leave home and if you are separated from your loved one.
- **The Calm Before the Storm: Family Conversations about Disaster Planning, Caregiving, Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia** (The Hartford Financial Services Group, 2010)
https://s0.hfdstatic.com/sites/the_hartford/files/cmme-storm.pdf
This guide helps caregivers prepare for natural disasters by planning with family, friends, and others. It includes worksheets, checklists and other helpful resources.

6. ELDER ABUSE AND FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION

- **Red Flags of Abuse** (National Center on Elder Abuse)
[https://ncea.acl.gov/NCEA/media/publications/How-at-Risk-for-Abuse-Are-People-with-Dementia\(2011\).pdf](https://ncea.acl.gov/NCEA/media/publications/How-at-Risk-for-Abuse-Are-People-with-Dementia(2011).pdf)
People with dementia are at greater risk of abuse and neglect than those of the general elderly population. This 2-page fact sheet shares warning signs of neglect, financial abuse/exploitation, psychological/emotional abuse and physical/sexual abuse.
- **Answers on Aging™ Financial Exploitation: Safeguarding Your Money & Property**
(National Association of Area Agencies on Aging)
<https://www.usaging.org/Files/financial-fraud-access508.pdf>
This 7-page brochure describes “warning signs” of financial exploitation, who may be at risk, and steps you can take to help avoid financial exploitation.

- **Senior Fraud** (Washington State Office of the Attorney General)

<http://www.atg.wa.gov/senior-fraud>

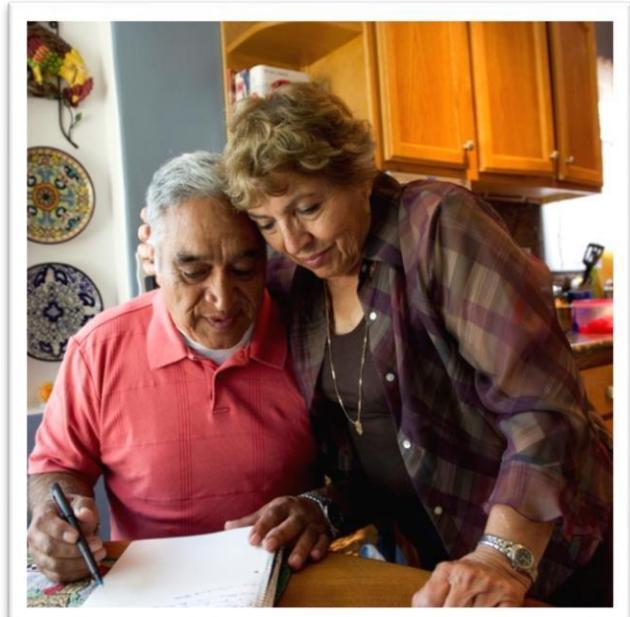
People 50+ are especially vulnerable to fraud and account for over half of all victims. This webpage offers information about common scams, how they operate, and a link to file a complaint online.

- **How to Report Concerns Involving Vulnerable Adults** (Department of Social and Health Services, Washington State)

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/home-and-community-services/report-concerns-involving-vulnerable-adults>

This webpage offers information about reporting either online or by phone. It explains what you will be asked to share and what to expect after a report is made.

*The direct phone line to report is: **1-866-ENDHARM (1-866-363-4276)***



MORE CARE AND SAFETY INFORMATION FOR CAREGIVERS

- **Caring for a Person with Alzheimer's Disease: Your Easy-to-Use Guide from the National Institute on Aging** (National Institute on Aging, 2017) <https://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/publication/caring-person-alzheimers-disease/about-guide> *This 100-page guide offers dementia care information and advice. It discusses daily care, sundowning and other behaviors, and where to find help.*
- **Family Caregiver Handbook** (Department of Social and Health Services, Washington State, 2013) <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/22-277.pdf> *A guide for family and other unpaid caregivers who care for an adult or senior with disabilities.*

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WANT TO TALK WITH A PERSON WHO CAN HELP WITH ISSUES OF DEMENTIA & SAFETY?

- The **Alzheimer's Association** is the world's leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support, and research. The Association's Washington State Chapter serves all of Washington and Northern Idaho. Specific services provided include:
 - Support groups & early-stage programs
 - Care consultation & education
 - MedicAlert wandering support
 - Web-based resources (www.alzwa.org)
 - 24/7 Helpline, call 1-800-272-3900
- The **Family Caregiver Support Program** is available to unpaid caregivers of adults needing care and living in Washington State. There are local Family Caregiver Support Program offices throughout the state. Caring and knowledgeable staff can help you:
 - Find local resources/services, including support groups, respite care and counseling
 - Get training on specific caregiving topics
 - Talk through specific issues, and offer practical information and caregiving suggestions
 - Find your local program [online](#) or call 1-855-567-0252 where you will either be put directly through to (or can leave a message for) your local program office, and someone will call you back.

These services are offered either free or at low cost. Certain eligibility requirements may apply, and availability varies from community to community.

Photo credits: Alzheimer's Association

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