



## GENERAL HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST FOR DEMENTIA

Aging at home has many benefits, especially for people with dementia who are easily confused by new and unfamiliar settings. Since the home can also be a potentially dangerous place for this population, basic safety precautions should be implemented.

This "Home Safety Audit" is a convenient and concise checklist to help insure that your home remains a safe place for your loved one. You may only need to do one or two of the things on this list at any point in the course of the disease. Keep this problem-solving guide handy and refer to it periodically.

### GENERAL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Remove poisonous houseplants
- Remove or cover mirrors if causing hallucinations
- Put child-proof plugs in outlets
- Remove or lock up sharp objects or potentially breakable objects
- Keep electric fans out of reach
- Lock up prescription and non-prescription drugs
- Lock up cleaning supplies, chemicals, poisons
- Cover smooth or shiny surfaces if causing glare
- Cover radiators with radiator guards
- Lock up valuables, important papers and documents
- Remove firearms
- Place reflector tape on furniture corners
- Cover exposed water pipes

### THE KITCHEN

- Lock up sharp objects, knives, possibly glassware
- Lock up poisons, chemicals, detergents
- Cover stove burners, remove knobs, install shut-off valves, install auto-pilots or buy electric stoves, put locks on oven/broiler doors
- Unplug or put away appliances such as blenders, food processors, irons
- Camouflage or disconnect garbage disposals
- Put locks on cabinets
- Put locks on refrigerators/freezers
- Keep garbage out of sight and reach
- Remove small non-food items that could be swallowed

## **Water**

- Secure water faucets, remove handles or turn off water, reduce hot water temperature
- Put mesh or a screen over open drains
- Make sure electrical cords aren't dangling near water

## **THE BATHROOM**

### **Bathing, showering**

- Install grab rails in tub or shower
- Buy bathmat or non-skid decals for bottom of tub or shower
- Use tub chair or bench for sitting down in tub
- Buy hand held shower nozzle
- Replace glass shower doors with unbreakable plastic
- Lock up razor blades, sharp objects
- Store electric razors out of sight and reach
- Make sure portable heater has auto-off thermostat
- Remove small rugs

### **Toileting**

- Put sign on bathroom door and leave door open so toilet is visible
- Install grab bars for sitting down and getting up from toilet
- Buy sturdy raised toilet seat or commode
- Have toilet paper easily visible and reachable
- Put wastebaskets out of sight if loved one urinates in them

## **WANDERING (AWAY FROM HOME)**

- Secure doors to outside with double key locks, or high or low locks
- Put alarms on doors or disguise them
- Hide key outside or give to neighbor
- Put automatic door closing devices on doors to outside
- Get ID bracelet for patient
- Notify local police department that your family member is memory impaired

## **WALKING AROUND (INSIDE THE HOME)**

- Reduce clutter
- Remove furniture that could be a hazard
- Pick up small rugs without non-skid backs
- Avoid polished floors that may be slippery or cause glare
- Make sure furniture won't move if leaned on

- Have adequate lighting that does not produce glare
- Put reflector tape in hallways and bedrooms to create a path to follow at night
- Install night lights
- Make sure wires and electrical cords are out of the way

## **AUTO**

- Take away car keys
- Install driver-controlled car door locks or child proof lock on loved one's door so it can't be opened from inside
- Install driver-controlled car windows
- Disarm or hide controls for automatic garage door

## **STAIRS**

- Put sturdy banisters or grab rails along both sides of stairs
- Put reflector tape on edge of treads
- Install barriers or gates at stairs
- Widen treads or shorten risers
- Replace outdoor stairs with ramps

## **BEDROOM**

- Locate bedroom near bathroom or buy a commode
- Use night-lights to orient person in dark
- Rent or purchase a hospital bed
- Remove bed frame if bed is too high off floor
- Install rails on bed
- Purchase "bumpers" or padding to surround bed
- Install reverse locks on doors
- Use monitor to listen to activity
- Remove carpeting if incontinence is a problem
- Buy room-darkening blinds or shades

## **WINDOWS, DOORS**

- Put opaque tape on glass door and picture windows
- Install spring-loaded door closer
- Put keyed locks on windows

## **OUTDOORS**

- Remove doormats
- Put away garden hose
- Put away barbecue equipment
- Install fences or plant hedges around yard
- Remove poisonous plants
- Be aware of potentially dangerous areas - pools, streams, lakes, tunnels, steep stairways, embankments, foliage and woods, busy streets, parking lots, unlocked parked cars

## **FIRE SAFETY**

- Have smoke alarms
- Supervise or restrict smoking
- Use safety ashtrays
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach
- Use flame-retardant mattresses, pillows, sheets
- Put firefighter sticker in bedroom window
- Inform neighbors of person's impairment and of features of the home, such as double key locks and double bolted doors, that may complicate rescue in an emergency
- Plan procedure for getting out in case of fire

## **PHONE**

- Buy telephone with direct dialing system for emergency or most important numbers
- Put important phone numbers in large print next to telephone
- Put large numbered template on phone
- Use answering machine for incoming messages
- Make sure phone cord is not a tripping hazard

## **OTHER PRECAUTIONS**

- Keep emergency phone numbers and medical info handy
- Have first aid kit easily accessible
- Put posters summarizing first aid procedures up on wall
- Get ID bracelet or other ID product

**The above checklist was retrieved on the Internet on March 16, 2006 at <http://www.homemods.org/library/hthelp/audit.html>**