



Ideas to Modify the Home When Living With Alzheimer's Disease

General Safety

- ✓ Install smoke alarms
- ✓ Lock up valuables, important papers and documents
- ✓ Make sure phone cord is not a tripping hazard
- ✓ Put child-proof plugs in electrical outlets
- ✓ Remove poisonous houseplants
- ✓ Replace glass shower doors with unbreakable plastic
- ✓ Use safety ashtrays
- ✓ Cover smooth or shiny surfaces if causing glare
- ✓ Place reflector tape on furniture corners
- ✓ Make sure portable heater has auto-off thermostat
- ✓ Remove carpeting if incontinence is a problem
- ✓ Buy room-darkening blinds or shades
- ✓ Put opaque tape on glass door and picture windows

Wandering

Some people with Alzheimer's have a tendency to wander away from their home or their caregiver. Knowing what to do to limit wandering can protect a person from becoming lost or even greater consequences. Be aware of potentially dangerous areas such as pools, streams, lakes, tunnels, steep stairways, embankments, foliage and woods, busy streets, parking lots, unlocked parked cars.

- ✓ Disarm or hide controls for automatic garage door
- ✓ Disguise the doors
- ✓ Install fences or plant hedges around yard
- ✓ Install secure locks on all outside windows and doors, use double key locks, or high or low locks
- ✓ Install spring-loaded door closer
- ✓ Keep a recent photograph or videotape of the person to assist police if the person becomes lost.
- ✓ Make sure that the person carries some kind of identification or wears a medical bracelet. If he or she gets lost and is unable to communicate adequately, this will alert others about identity and medical condition.
- ✓ Notify local police department about impaired family member
- ✓ Put automatic door closing devices on doors to outside

Self Injury: Keeping the person safe is one of the most important aspects of caregiving.

- ✓ Consider installing an automatic shut-off switch on the stove to prevent burns or fire.
- ✓ Cover exposed water pipes
- ✓ Cover radiators with radiator guards
- ✓ Keep doors locked. Consider a keyed deadbolt or an additional lock up high or down low on the door. If the person can open a lock because it is familiar, a new latch or lock may help.
- ✓ Keep matches, lighters and electric fans out of reach
- ✓ Keep the house free from clutter.
- ✓ Label prescription and non prescription medications and keep them locked up.
- ✓ Make sure knives, lighters, matches, and guns are secured and out of reach.
- ✓ Remove or lock up sharp objects or potentially breakable objects
- ✓ Make sure lighting is good both inside the home and outside.
- ✓ Put locks on refrigerators/freezers
- ✓ Remove poisonous plants
- ✓ Remove scatter rugs and anything else that might contribute to a fall.
- ✓ Remove small non-food items that could be swallowed
- ✓ Secure or put away anything that could cause danger, both inside and outside the house.
- ✓ Supervise or restrict smoking
- ✓ Use childproof latches on kitchen cabinets and any place where cleaning supplies, poisons, other chemicals or sharp objects are kept.
- ✓ Use flame-retardant mattresses, pillows, sheets

Fall Proofing

- ✓ Avoid polished floors that may be slippery or cause glare
- ✓ Have adequate lighting that does not produce glare
- ✓ Install night lights
- ✓ Install rails on bed
- ✓ Install safety rails in the bathroom
- ✓ Make sure furniture won't move if leaned on
- ✓ Pick up small rugs without non-skid backs
- ✓ Purchase "bumpers" or padding to surround bed
- ✓ Put away barbecue equipment
- ✓ Put away garden hose
- ✓ Put reflector tape in hallways/bedrooms (to create a path to follow at night)
- ✓ Reduce clutter
- ✓ Remove doormats
- ✓ Remove furniture that could be a hazard

Fall Proofing, cont.

- ✓ Use night-lights to orient person in dark
- ✓ Make sure wires and electrical cords are out of the way
- ✓ Put sturdy banisters or grab rails along both sides of stairs

Bathroom

- ✓ Buy bathmat or non-skid decals for bottom of tub or shower
- ✓ Buy hand held shower nozzle
- ✓ Buy sturdy raised toilet seat or commode
- ✓ Have toilet paper easily visible and reachable
- ✓ Install grab bars for sitting down and getting up from toilet
- ✓ Install grab rails in tub or shower
- ✓ Make sure electrical cords aren't dangling near water
- ✓ Put mesh or a screen over open drains
- ✓ Put sign on bathroom door and leave door open so toilet is visible
- ✓ Put wastebaskets out of sight if loved one urinates in them
- ✓ Remove the locks on bathroom doors to prevent the person from accidentally locking himself or herself in.
- ✓ Secure water faucets, remove handles or turn off water, reduce hot water temperature
- ✓ Use tub chair or bench for sitting down in tub

Kitchen

- ✓ Camouflage or disconnect garbage disposals
- ✓ Cover stove burners
- ✓ If gas stove, install shut-off valves or buy electric stoves
- ✓ Keep garbage out of sight and reach
- ✓ Put locks on oven/broiler doors
- ✓ Remove knobs
- ✓ Unplug or put away appliances such as blenders, food processors, irons

Emergency Planning

- ✓ Buy telephone with direct dialing system for emergency or most important numbers
- ✓ Have first aid kit easily accessible
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Keep emergency phone numbers and medical info handy
- ✓ Plan procedures for getting out of the house in case of fire
- ✓ Put important phone numbers in large print next to telephone
- ✓ Put large numbered template on phone
- ✓ Put posters summarizing first aid procedures up on wall

Driving

Making the decision a person with Alzheimer's is no longer safe to drive is difficult. This needs to be communicated carefully and sensitively. Even though the person may be upset by the loss of independence, safety must be the priority.

- ✓ Ask the doctor or an occupational therapist to help. The person may view the health care professionals as an "authority". Either professional can contact the Department of Motor Vehicles and request the person be re-evaluated for safe driving.
- ✓ Be sensitive to the person's feelings about losing the ability to drive, but be firm.
- ✓ If all else fails, disable the car or move it to a location where the person cannot see it or gain access to it.
- ✓ If just having keys is important to the person, substitute a different set of keys.
- ✓ If necessary, take the car keys.
- ✓ Install driver-controlled car windows
- ✓ Look for clues that safe driving is no longer possible, including getting lost in familiar places, driving too fast or too slow, disregarding traffic signs, or getting angry or confused.
- ✓ 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

Resources:

www.safeaging.com

www.safeaging.com/DriveSafely.pdf

www.homemods.org

Excerpts taken from [*NIH's Senior Health Caring for Someone with Alzheimers*](#)