

How to Make Your Home Feel Familiar and Comforting

To help jog your loved one's memory, incorporate sights and sounds around the home that are familiar to them. Put an "X" next to each item that may need to be added.

Things to Add to the Home

- Label drawers, closets and rooms to help the person get around the home by himself or herself.
- Place large photographs of family members and pets around the home to help enhance his or her memory.
- Place large print books around the home for the person to read. Books with a lot of pictures are also a good idea if the person finds reading to be difficult.
- Play music that is familiar to the person. Sounds from nature and chamber music may be good choices.



Ten Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

- 1. Recent memory loss.** Alzheimer's patients often forget and repeatedly ask the same questions, unaware of the earlier answer.
- 2. Difficulty performing familiar tasks.** People with Alzheimer's disease may have trouble preparing a meal or they may forget to serve it.
- 3. Problems with language.** A person with Alzheimer's may forget simple words or use inappropriate words.
- 4. Disorientation to time and place.** People with Alzheimer's may get lost on their own street and forget how they got there or how to get home.
- 5. Poor judgement.** A person with Alzheimer's disease could forget about a child under their care, and leave the house.
- 6. Problems with abstract thinking.** A person with Alzheimer's could forget what numbers are for and how to use them.
- 7. Misplacing things.** A person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in inappropriate places, such as an iron in a freezer or a wristwatch in a sugar bowl.
- 8. Changes in mood and behavior.** People with Alzheimer's can have rapid mood swings - from calm to tears to anger - within a few minutes.
- 9. Personality changes.** A person with Alzheimer's may change personalities drastically, becoming irritable, suspicious or fearful.
- 10. Loss of initiative.** People with Alzheimer's may become passive and reluctant to get involved in activities.

Contact the following list of resources to find out more about Alzheimer's.

T. Stuart Payne Memory Care Center,
(540) 380-2986

Alzheimer's Association/Central
& Western Virginia Chapter,
(540) 345-7900

LOA/Area Agency on Aging,
(540) 345-00451

Please call us at
540-380-2986

An expert in Alzheimer's care is available to discuss your particular situation, our services, or simply lend a caring, attentive ear. You may also order additional complimentary copies of this brochure.

The Richfield Senior Education Initiative is a community service program sponsored by Richfield Retirement Community. In keeping with our not-for-profit mission, the Initiative offers helpful information and support, free of charge, to area seniors and their families through the distribution of educational materials and sponsorship of community events.

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Alzheimer's...
Caring for Your Loved One at Home



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AND DISCUSSION

How to Keep Your Loved One Safe and Comfortable at Home

When you care for an Alzheimer's patient at home, you must try to keep him or her safe and comfortable. Making the home safe means eliminating hazards that can cause the person to trip or otherwise get hurt. Keeping the patient comfortable means enabling the person to live in a place that is clutter-free, calm and familiar. This guide can help.

To be sure your home is safe and secure, review the checklist below. Walk through your home with the list in hand. Put an "X" next to each item that needs attention. Then correct each situation as soon as possible.

Patient's Bedroom

- Everything the patient doesn't need or use regularly has been removed. This includes things normally kept in closets and drawers. Alzheimer's patients do better with less clutter.
- The room is well lighted.
- There is a lamp next to the person's bed. It is sturdy enough that the person can operate it without knocking it over.
- There is a working night-light. It is turned on every night.
- There are no rugs on which the patient can trip. Any small rugs should have a no-slip backing.
- There is a clear, unobstructed path to the bathroom.

The Bathroom

- Everything but essentials (towel, soap, toothpaste and toothbrush) has been removed. You can provide shampoo, shaving cream, a razor and other items as they are needed. Then remove them.
- No medicines, toiletries or cleaning supplies are kept in a cabinet or closet unless it is locked.
- There are grab bars in and near the bathtub or shower.
- There are no-slip decals or a no-skid mat on the floor of the tub or shower.
- If the person has difficulty using the tub, there is a bathtub bench and a hand-held shower.
- If the person has trouble using the toilet, there are grab bars near it.
- The bathroom has a working night-light.
- Any rug or mat has a no-skid backing.



The Kitchen

- The stove has been adjusted so the patient cannot operate it unless you are there to supervise. A plumber or the gas company can help adjust it if necessary.
- All sharp kitchen knives and appliances such as electric mixers have been removed or locked up.
- All cleaning products, polish, bleach and detergents have been removed or locked up.

Throughout the Home

- The home is clutter-free. Alzheimer's patients do better with as few objects around as possible.
- There is adequate space for the person to move around.
- Things are always kept in the same place so the person feels comfortable and does not become confused.
- The house is not noisy. For example, the TV and radio are turned off when not in use. Alzheimer's patients do better in a calm, quiet place.
- All rugs are fastened down or have a no-slip backing so the person cannot trip over them.
- All electric cords are in good condition. They are secured so the person cannot trip over them.
- There are working night-lights in the hallways.
- Floors are not slippery.
- Stairs and hallways are free of clutter that can cause a fall.

- All tools and appliances, such as an iron, sewing machine, lawn mower, heating pad and power drill have been removed or locked away.
- The car keys are always kept in a place where the Alzheimer's patient cannot find them.
- All paints, insecticides and poisons are removed or locked away.
- Houseplants have been removed. Certain leaves and flowers are poisonous if ingested. Plant containers placed on floors also present unnecessary obstacles.
- All doors are secured so the person cannot get out without assistance. Wandering is a common symptom of Alzheimer's disease. Have locks adjusted so the person cannot open them, but that can be opened quickly by you in an emergency.
- All windows are secured. The patient should not be able to open the windows, but you should be able to open them quickly in an emergency. If you have questions about windows or fire safety, check with your local fire department.
- All radiators have been blocked off or covered so the patient cannot accidentally burn himself or herself.
- A plumber has adjusted your hot water heater so that water temperature in kitchen, bathroom and laundry systems is in a safe 90 to 110 degree range.
- The use of cigarettes and matches is prohibited or closely supervised.
- Interior doors have been altered so the person cannot accidentally lock himself or herself in a room. Remove the locks or tape the door latches open.