

If you are caring for a person with Alzheimer's disease it may be necessary to make changes to the home in order to help keep them safe. This room-by-room checklist will help you identify potential hazards so you can keep your loved one safe.

Keep in mind that it may not be necessary to make all of the suggested changes. This list covers a wide range of safety concerns that may arise, and some of the modifications suggested may never be needed. Remember to re-evaluate home safety periodically as the persons condition may change over time.

THROUGHOUT THE HOME

- ☐ Place a list of emergency numbers near all telephones.
- ☐ Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors in the kitchen and all bedrooms.
- ☐ Install secure locks on all exterior doors and windows.
- ☐ Install alarms that notify you when a door or window is opened.
- ☐ Hide a spare house key outside or install a lock box in case the person with Alzheimer's disease locks you out of the house.
- ☐ Tack extension cords to the baseboards of a room to avoid tripping and remove extension cords from walking paths.
- ☐ Cover unused electrical outlets with childproof plugs.
- ☐ Check all rooms for adequate lighting.
- ☐ Install light switches at the top and the bottom of stairs.
- ☐ Install at least one handrail that extends beyond the first and last steps of any stairway.
- ☐ Carpet stairways or have non-slip safety strips installed.
- ☐ Put a gate across the stairs if the person has balance problems.
- ☐ Keep all medications locked away.
- ☐ Keep all alcohol in a locked cabinet or out of reach of the person with Alzheimer's. Drinking alcohol can increase confusion.
- ☐ If the person with Alzheimer's smokes, remove matches, lighters, ashtrays, cigarettes, and other means of smoking from view. This reduces fire hazards, and with these reminders out of sight, the person may forget the desire to smoke.
- ☐ Remove clutter, which can create confusion and danger. Throw out or recycle newspapers and magazines regularly. Keep all areas where people walk free of furniture.
- ☐ Keep plastic bags out of reach. A person with Alzheimer's disease may choke or suffocate.
- ☐ Remove all guns and other weapons from the home or lock them up. Install safety locks on guns or remove ammunition and firing pins.
- ☐ Lock all power tools and machinery in the garage, workroom, or basement.
- ☐ Remove all poisonous plants from the home. Contact poison control (1-800-222-1222) for a list of poisonous plants or visit <https://www.poison.org/articles/plant>
- ☐ If valuable documents or materials are stored on a home computer, protect the files with passwords and back up the files.
- ☐ Consider monitoring computer use by the person with Alzheimer's, and install software that screens for objectionable or offensive material on the Internet.



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OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

- ☐ Keep steps sturdy and textured to prevent falls in wet or icy weather.
- ☐ Mark the edges of steps with bright or reflective tape.
- ☐ Consider installing a ramp with handrails as an alternative to the steps.
- ☐ Eliminate uneven surfaces or walkways, hoses, and other objects that may cause a person to trip.
- ☐ Restrict access to a swimming pool by fencing it with a locked gate, covering it, and closely supervising it when in use.
- ☐ In the patio area, remove the fuel source and fire starters from any grills when not in use, and supervise use when the person with Alzheimer's is present.
- ☐ Place a small bench or table by the entry door to hold parcels while unlocking the door.
- ☐ Make sure outside lighting is adequate. Light sensors that turn on lights automatically as you approach the house may be useful. They also may be used in other parts of the home.
- ☐ Prune bushes and foliage well away from walkways and doorways.
- ☐ Consider a "NO SOLICITING" sign for the front gate or door.

ENTRYWAY

- ☐ Remove throw rugs.
- ☐ Use textured strips or nonskid wax on hardwood and tile floors to prevent slipping.

KITCHEN

- ☐ Install childproof door latches on storage cabinets and drawers designated for breakable or dangerous items. Lock away all household cleaning products, matches, knives, scissors, blades, small appliances, and anything valuable.
- ☐ If prescription or nonprescription drugs are kept in the kitchen, store them in a locked cabinet.
- ☐ Remove throw rugs and foam pads from the floor.
- ☐ Install safety knobs and an automatic shut-off switch on the stove.
- ☐ Do not use or store flammable liquids in the kitchen. Lock them in the garage or in an outside storage unit.
- ☐ Keep a night-light in the kitchen.
- ☐ Remove or secure the "junk drawer." A person with Alzheimer's may eat small items such as matches, hardware, erasers, plastics, etc.
- ☐ Remove artificial fruits and vegetables or food-shaped kitchen magnets, which might appear to be edible.
- ☐ Insert a drain trap in the kitchen sink to catch anything that may otherwise become lost or clog the plumbing.
- ☐ Consider disconnecting the garbage disposal. People with Alzheimer's may place objects or their own hands in the disposal.



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BEDROOM

- ☐ Anticipate the reasons a person with Alzheimer's disease might get out of bed, such as hunger, thirst, going to the bathroom, restlessness, and pain. Try to meet these needs by offering food and fluids and scheduling ample toileting.
- ☐ Use a night-light.
- ☐ Use a monitoring device (like those used for infants) to alert you to any sounds indicating a fall or other need for help. This also is an effective device for bathrooms.
- ☐ Remove throw rugs.
- ☐ Remove portable space heaters. If you use portable fans, be sure that objects cannot be placed in the blades.
- ☐ Be cautious when using electric mattress pads, electric blankets, electric sheets, and heating pads, all of which can cause burns and fires. Keep controls out of reach.
- ☐ If the person with Alzheimer's disease is at risk of falling out of bed, place mats next to the bed, as long as they do not create a greater risk of accident.
- ☐ Use transfer or mobility aids.

BATHROOM

- ☐ Do not leave a severely impaired person with Alzheimer's alone in the bathroom.
- ☐ Remove the lock from the bathroom door to prevent the person with Alzheimer's from getting locked inside.
- ☐ Place nonskid adhesive strips, decals, or mats in the tub and shower. Consider placing these strips next to the tub, toilet, and sink.
- ☐ Use washable wall-to-wall bathroom carpeting to prevent slipping on wet tile floors.
- ☐ Use a raised toilet seat with handrails, or install grab bars beside the toilet.
- ☐ Install grab bars in the tub/shower. A grab bar in contrasting color to the wall is easier to see.
- ☐ Use a foam rubber faucet cover (often used for small children) in the tub to prevent serious injury should the person with Alzheimer's fall.
- ☐ Use a plastic shower stool and a hand-held shower head to make bathing easier.
- ☐ In the shower, tub, and sink, use a single faucet that mixes hot and cold water to avoid burns.
- ☐ Set the water heater at 120°F to avoid scalding tap water.
- ☐ Insert drain traps in sinks to catch small items that may be lost or flushed down the drain.
- ☐ Store medications (prescription and nonprescription) in a locked cabinet. Check medication dates and dispose of outdated medications.
- ☐ Remove cleaning products from under the sink, or lock them away.
- ☐ Use a night-light.
- ☐ Remove small electrical appliances from the bathroom. Cover electrical outlets.
- ☐ If a man with Alzheimer's disease uses an electric razor, have him use a mirror outside the bathroom to avoid water contact.



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LIVING ROOM

- ☐ Clear electrical cords from all areas where people walk.
- ☐ Remove throw rugs. Repair or replace torn carpet.
- ☐ Place decals at eye level on sliding glass doors, picture windows, or furniture with large glass panels to identify the glass pane.
- ☐ Do not leave the person with Alzheimer's disease alone with an open fire in the fireplace.
- ☐ Consider alternative heating sources.
- ☐ Keep matches and cigarette lighters out of reach.
- ☐ Keep the remote controls for the television, DVD player, and stereo system out of sight.

LAUNDRY ROOM

- ☐ Keep the door to the laundry room locked if possible.
- ☐ Lock all laundry products in a cabinet. Laundry detergent pods can be fatal if eaten by accident.
- ☐ Remove large knobs from the washer and dryer if the person with Alzheimer's tampers with machinery.
- ☐ Close and latch the doors and lids to the washer and dryer to prevent objects from being placed in the machines.

GARAGE/SHED/BASEMENT

- ☐ Lock access to all garages, sheds, and basements if possible.
- ☐ Inside a garage or shed, keep all potentially dangerous items, such as tools, tackle, machines, and sporting equipment either locked away in cabinets or in appropriate boxes/cases.
- ☐ Secure and lock all motor vehicles and keep them out of sight if possible. Consider covering vehicles, including bicycles, that are not frequently used. This may reduce the possibility that the person with Alzheimer's will think about leaving.
- ☐ Keep all toxic materials, such as paint, fertilizers, gasoline, or cleaning supplies, out of view.
- ☐ Either put them in a high, dry place, or lock them in a cabinet.
- ☐ If the person with Alzheimer's is permitted in a garage, shed, or basement, preferably with supervision, make sure the area is well lit and that stairs have a handrail and are safe to walk up and down. Keep walkways clear of debris and clutter, and place overhanging items out of reach.



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