

# Making your home dementia friendly





# Introduction

If you have dementia, living at home gives you more independence and also means you can continue to enjoy your own familiar environment.

The right home environment can help you to stay safe, physically active and also provide prompts to keep you mentally stimulated and in touch with friends and family.

This booklet describes some of the ways to create a home environment that does not become confusing or restrictive if you have dementia. It is divided into sections, each of which covers a different topic.

Each section starts with an explanation of why that topic is important and lists some practical, quick and easy things you can do to make the home more dementia friendly. Further suggestions may also be listed to consider in the longer term, as the dementia progresses. These may require resources and help from relatives, friends or care workers.

Everyone experiences dementia differently. You may need to try some of the ideas out to see what works best for you.

This booklet will be useful for people with dementia who want to stay at home, and for relatives and friends who are supporting them. It is based on research, and the personal experiences of people with dementia, their families and care staff.



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# Lighting

## Why this is important

Good lighting helps you see clearly and make sense of where you are. As you get older you may find that you need a lot more light than before to be able to see properly. You should have your eyes tested regularly. Daylight through windows will help you stay aware of the time of day and the weather. Improved lighting can prevent dark areas and shadows on the floor, which can be confusing. Reflective glare from windows, computer screens and TVs can cause confusion. Dimmer switches will give you more control over lighting. Keeping your bedroom dark will help you sleep better.

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## Practical tips

- Check that curtains and pelmets, furniture, TVs or plants are not blocking natural light from entering through the windows.
- Get the windows cleaned regularly.
- Use brighter bulbs in light fittings, if it is safe to do so, or use extra lights.
- Make sure that the bedroom can be made dark at night.
- Adjust settings, move other light sources or change set position to reduce glare from TVs.

# Flooring

## Why this is important

It is very easy to trip over uneven floors or mats. Changes in the colour of the floor between rooms, rugs or dark floor mats can sometimes look like something you need to step over. Shiny floors can look wet or slippery and speckles in flooring may look like litter. You will be able to walk more confidently and safely over plain matt flooring. The colour of the floor, particularly on stairs, should contrast with the walls. It may be best to avoid floor colours that might be confused with real things, such as blue looking like water or green looking like grass.

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## Practical tips

- Remove floor mats and rugs as they can cause trips and falls.
- Check that flexes for lights and other appliances are not a trip hazard.

## Further suggestions

- Make sure that floor mats and the carpet edging or cover strips between rooms are a similar colour to the flooring.
- Where possible lay matt, plain-coloured flooring throughout the home.
- Indicate edges of stairs with brightly-coloured tape or paint.



# Furniture and furnishings

## Why this is important

Dementia may affect how well you can distinguish between different colours. It may also affect how you see objects in three dimensions. Using bright and contrasting colours for furniture and furnishings helps everybody see things more easily. The colours of furniture, including beds, tables, chairs and lamps need to contrast with the walls and floor. Stripes or strong patterns can be confusing and disorientating. Paintings or other artwork could be misinterpreted as dementia progresses and you may not recognise your reflection in a mirror.

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## Practical tips

- Check pictures and mirrors and cover or remove them if they might cause confusion.
- Use plain, brightly coloured bed and table linen that contrasts with the walls and floor.

## Further suggestions

- Make sure that the colour of the switches for lights and appliances contrasts with the wall.
- Replace furnishings that have stripes or strong patterns.
- Use furniture and plain coloured furnishings that contrast with the walls and floors so that they can be easily seen.
- Choose items to help with orientation, such as a houseplant to show the way to the garden.

A man in a blue sweater is looking at a yellow sticky note on a white refrigerator. The note says "LUNCH IN THE FRIDGE FOR 10 O'CLOCK". The refrigerator has a "LOGIK" logo.

LOGIK

LUNCH IN  
THE FRIDGE  
FOR 10 O'CLOCK

# Knowing where things are

## Why this is important

If you have memory problems you may forget where things are kept. Visual cues such as putting pictures or labels on the outside of cupboards, wardrobes and drawers can help with this. They can also help you make sense of the home generally. Open shelves or transparent doors will make it easier for you to find things. Appliances should be easy to find and not hidden behind cupboard doors. It is also important that you know where things you use every day are kept, and that you can find them easily.

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## Practical tips

- Always keep your keys and glasses in the same place.
- Label cupboards and drawers with pictures or text telling you what is inside.
- Make sure appliances are easy to find.

## Further suggestions

- Take the doors off cupboards and wardrobes if it is safe to do this.
- Fit cupboards with non-reflective, transparent (shatterproof) fronts so you can see inside.
- Leave the bathroom door open when not in use so the toilet can be easily seen.

# Eating and drinking

## Why this is important

Eating and drinking well is important for your health. However, you may find that you lose your motivation to prepare meals, have a reduced appetite, and do not eat at usual mealtimes. You may also find it difficult to see white food on a white plate or a white plate on a white table.

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## Practical tips

- Make sure the items you use every day are easy to find.
- Use brightly coloured cloths, towels and kitchen rolls that contrast with surfaces and appliances.
- Ensure that appliances such as kettles can be seen and are easy to use.
- Use coloured crockery that contrasts with the food you are going to eat, as well as the table or tablecloth.

## Further suggestions

- Use clear plastic containers to store food so that you can see what is inside.
- If you need to replace equipment or appliances, like a kettle, try and make sure they're the same design or model as the old one, so you can remember how to use them.

# Using the bathroom

## Why this is important

Not being able to find the toilet when you need it can cause anxiety. The toilet seat and lid should be in a contrasting colour to the rest of it so that it is easier to see. Rails in a different colour to the walls, traditional-style or lever taps that are marked hot and cold, easy-to-use basin, bath and shower controls and a traditional toilet flush will also be more obvious. Bathrooms can get crowded with items that you do not use every day and this can be distracting.

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## Practical tips

- Put away any items that are causing clutter on surfaces.
- Use towels and toilet rolls in contrasting colours to the wall, to make them easier to see.
- Put a sign with a picture of a toilet and the word 'Toilet' on the door at a height where you can see it easily.
- Try leaving the bathroom light on during the night.
- Consider removing the toilet lid.

## Further suggestions

- Ensure that toilet, bath and shower switches and controls are of familiar design and easy to use.
  - Use a flood-safe plug in the basin and the bath.
  - Change any door locks so that they can be easily opened in an emergency.
  - Remove the wastepaper bin if it might be mistaken for the toilet.
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# Keeping things in order

## Why this is important

Clutter around the home may make you feel confused and distracted. It may also make it difficult for you to find things. Items left on the floor can lead to trips and falls. Noise and other distractions can make concentration difficult, so try to reduce these as much as possible. Turn off the TV or radio when you are not watching or listening to them.

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## Practical tips

- Remove excess clutter and unused items (eg old newspapers) but keep enough so that the space feels personal.
- Consider having a basket or tray for important paperwork.
- Make sure that cupboards and drawers are tidy so it is easy to find things.
- Remove any unnecessary cushions or throws.
- Try to reduce background noise.
- Put things back where they belong when you have finished with them.

## Further suggestions

- Buy more cupboards if you need more space to store things.
- Put up extra open shelves if needed.

# Keeping safe

## Why this is important

Feeling safe and confident in your home is very important if you are living on your own. There are different types of grab rails, alarms and sensors that can be installed including smoke detectors to help you stay safe at home. Professionals, for example occupational therapists, the fire and rescue service, or home improvement agencies can help you make your home safe. It's also important to keep your home at an appropriate temperature throughout the seasons to prevent you getting too hot or too cold.

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## Practical tips

- Lock away any potentially hazardous or sharp items.
- Make sure the TV and radio are switched off if not in use.
- Check your thermostat settings as the weather changes.
- Reduce the temperature of hot water to avoid scalds.
- Make sure ICE (in case of emergency) numbers are near your telephone.

## Further suggestions

- Consider using socket covers if sockets are not being used.
- Get gas or electric fires checked for safety.
- Check that door handles and locks are easy to see and use.
- Consider installing grab rails on stairs or along long walls.



# Keeping active and engaged

## Why this is important

Keeping active and engaged can really improve your quality of life, so making sure that you can still enjoy doing your favourite things and stay in contact with people is important. A clock and calendar will help you remember the time and date so you don't miss appointments or events.

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## Practical tips

- Make sure items like puzzles, photographs or books are easy to find.
- Make sure you can see a large-faced clock and calendar.
- Check the telephone is easy to use.
- Put a photo of a friend or family member beside their telephone number to help you remember who to call.

## Further suggestions

- Put a whiteboard where you can see it easily, so you can write reminders of things you need to do.
- Make sure you have some chairs with arms, as they are much easier to get out of.

# Enjoying the outside

## Why this is important

Views and access to the outside throughout the year are important for your wellbeing. Gardening or enjoying nature can be very therapeutic. It is helpful if it is easy to recognise your front door to help prevent you from feeling disorientated.

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## Practical tips

- Take opportunities to get outdoors throughout the year.
- Make sure you can see the outside through your windows. Place a chair and table so that you can sit and watch what's happening outside.
- Remove any poisonous or spiky plants.

## Further suggestions

- Check that the front door is easily distinguishable from the others in the road or block.
- Make sure that the door lock and keys are easy to use.
- Check that the paving is safe and even.
- Make sure that there is somewhere sheltered to sit outside where you can rest.



## Visitors to your home

If you have been using some of the ideas in this booklet, it is important that family members, friends and care workers who may visit you at home understand that you have arranged your home so that it is a safe and supportive environment.


Ask them not to move your furniture or sort out your cupboards unless you are sure you want this done. If you do, make sure you do this together so you can remember where things go.


Ask them to put back any items they have taken out of cupboards or off shelves. Make sure they return furniture to its proper place before they leave.


# Checklist



This checklist is designed to help you remember some of the main changes you can put in place to make your home more dementia friendly. You can also use it to keep track of what you have already done, and make your own notes about other steps you may want to take.



Don't feel you need to complete everything on this checklist. It's important to remember that everyone experiences dementia differently. Make the changes you think will work best for you.

Changes to make	Yes/ no	What needs to be done	Date checked
 <b>Lighting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Check that nothing is blocking the windows and that they are clean.</li><li>• Use brighter bulbs or extra lights.</li><li>• Make sure the bedroom can be made dark at night.</li><li>• Make adjustments to reduce reflective glare from the TV.</li></ul>			


Changes to make	Yes/ no	What needs to be done	Date checked
<div>  </div> <p><b>Flooring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove rugs and lay plain matt flooring.</li> <li>• Check that flexes are not a trip hazard.</li> <li>• Make sure carpet edging and cover strips are a similar colour to the flooring.</li> <li>• Outline edges of stairs.</li> </ul> <div>  </div> <p><b>Furniture and furnishings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check that furniture and furnishings contrast with the walls and floors, and don't have stripes or strong patterns.</li> <li>• Use bright, contrasting linen.</li> <li>• Make sure light switches contrast with the wall.</li> <li>• Check if mirrors or artworks may be confusing.</li> </ul>			

Changes to make	Yes/ no	What needs to be done	Date checked
 <p><b>Knowing where things are</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always keep keys and glasses in the same place.</li> <li>• Label cupboards and drawers.</li> <li>• Make appliances easy to find.</li> <li>• Put transparent fronts on cupboards and wardrobes, or remove doors.</li> </ul>			
 <p><b>Eating and drinking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make frequently used items and appliances easy to find and use.</li> <li>• Use bright cloths and towels.</li> <li>• Use crockery that contrasts with your food and with the table.</li> <li>• Use clear plastic containers for storage.</li> </ul>			

Changes to make	Yes/ no	What needs to be done	Date checked
 <p><b>Using the bathroom</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a coloured toilet seat.</li> <li>• Put a sign on the door to remind you where the toilet is.</li> <li>• Use a flood-safe plug.</li> <li>• Make sure controls and the door lock are familiar and easy to use.</li> </ul>			
 <p><b>Keeping things in order</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove clutter including unnecessary cushions and throws.</li> <li>• Consider a basket or tray for paperwork.</li> <li>• Keep shelves and cupboards tidy.</li> <li>• Get extra cupboards and shelves.</li> <li>• Reduce background TV or radio noise.</li> </ul>			

Changes to make	Yes/ no	What needs to be done	Date checked
<p>  <b>Keeping safe</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lock away hazardous items.</li> <li>• Check water temperature and thermostat settings.</li> <li>• Check gas or electric fires for safety.</li> <li>• Consider installing grab rails.</li> </ul> <p>  <b>Keeping active and engaged</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep doing the things you enjoy.</li> <li>• Keep things you use often close at hand.</li> <li>• Make sure you can see a clock and calendar.</li> <li>• Check the telephone is easy to use. Use a photo of a friend or family member to remind you to call them.</li> </ul>			



Changes to make	Yes/ no	What needs to be done	Date checked
 <p><b>Enjoying the outside</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take opportunities to go outside all year round and make sure you can see outside.</li> <li>• Have a sheltered area outside where you can sit and rest.</li> <li>• Remove spiky or poisonous plants.</li> <li>• Make sure your front door is distinctive and you can use the lock.</li> <li>• Check the paving is safe.</li> </ul>			

**For your own notes**

# Useful organisations

There are a number of organisations that provide further information, support or advice that may help you live well at home. You may need to find the contact details of these organisations in your area. This section tells you where you should be able to find these details, and has space for you to write them down.

## **Alzheimer's Society**

**T** 020 7423 3500

**W** [www.alzheimers.org.uk/localinfo](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/localinfo)

Local Alzheimer's Society offices can advise on the services available in your area. This may include homecare and support services.

### **Local contact details:**

Dementia Connect is Alzheimer's Society's online dementia services directory. Enter your postcode to see the services available in your local area.

**W** [www.alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaconnect](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaconnect)

## **Age UK**

**T** 0800 169 65 65

**W** [www.ageuk.org.uk/about-us/local-partners/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/about-us/local-partners/)

Local Age UK offices provide services to people in later life, working in partnership with the national organisation. Services include information, advice and advocacy; home help and handy person schemes; IT and other training.

### **Local contact details:**

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## **DSDC Dementia Services Development Centre**

**W** [www.dementia.stir.ac.uk](http://www.dementia.stir.ac.uk)

International centre providing resources including online guides and print publications on design solutions for people living with dementia.

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## **Local council**

**W** [www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council](http://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council)

The social services department can arrange community support and social care to help you live as independently as possible.

### **Local contact details:**

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## **Fire and rescue service**

**T** 01827 302300

**W** [www.cfoa.org.uk/frs](http://www.cfoa.org.uk/frs)

This service can provide free home safety visits. They offer advice about how to make the home safer, as well as fitting smoke alarms and planning escape routes.

### **Local contact details:**

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## **GP**

**W** [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search)

The GP can refer you to other health and social care professionals who may be able to help you live well at home, for example an occupational therapist.

### **Local contact details:**

## **Handyman (or other tradesperson)**

**T** 0333 555 1234

**W** [www.trustmark.org.uk](http://www.trustmark.org.uk)

A handyman can carry out any work to your home that you may not be able to do yourself.

### **Local contact details:**

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## **Home improvement agency**

**T** 0300 124 0315

**W** [www-foundations.uk.com/hia-search](http://www-foundations.uk.com/hia-search)

Organisations providing information, advice and support to help older people, people with disabilities, and vulnerable people to live safely and independently in their own homes.

### **Local contact details:**

# Acknowledgements

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The Merton Council Dementia Hub  
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United Kingdom Homecare Association (UKHCA)

This booklet can be downloaded from our website at  
[alzheimers.org.uk/dementiafriendlyhome](http://alzheimers.org.uk/dementiafriendlyhome)

Sources are available on request.

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**Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading support and research charity for people with dementia, their families and carers. We provide information and support to people with any form of dementia and their carers through our publications, National Dementia Helpline, website, and more than 3,000 local services. We campaign for better quality of life for people with dementia and greater understanding of dementia. We also fund an innovative programme of medical and social research into the cause, cure and prevention of dementia and the care people receive.**

If you have any concerns about Alzheimer's disease or any other form of dementia, visit [alzheimers.org.uk](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk) or call the **Alzheimer's Society National Dementia Helpline** on **0300 222 1122**. (Interpreters are available in any language. Calls may be recorded or monitored for training and evaluation purposes).

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