

Caregiving in  
The Comfort of Home®

# Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

## Alzheimer’s Disease – Preparing the Home

Your goal in adapting the home for a person with Alzheimer’s disease (AD) is to keep the surroundings as familiar as possible, while making the changes necessary to create a home that is calming, reassuring, safe, and supportive.

The home should be suitable for AD symptoms, which include—

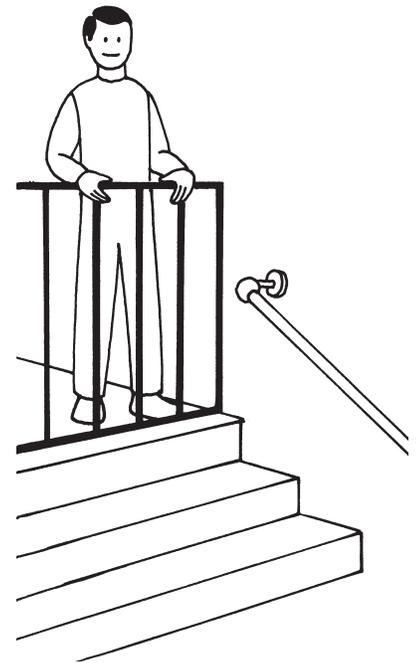
- Memory loss
- Confusion about how to get to or find a particular room
- Decreased judgment
- Tendency to wander
- Poor impulse control
- Changes in vision, hearing, depth perception
- Sensitivity to changes in temperature

AD symptoms get worse as time goes on. In the *early stage* it causes mostly thinking (cognitive) difficulties. Eventually it causes physical decline as well. In the *late stage*, the loss of abilities such as walking has a major effect on how much care will be needed. Features of the home, such

as steps and narrow bathroom doors, can become major obstacles to providing care.

***Not all changes to the home need to be made at once.*** Remember that it is difficult for a person with AD to adjust to changes in the environment. Therefore, it may be best to make some changes when the person is in the *early stage* of the illness and will have the easiest time getting used to them.

When the *necessary* changes are made, the home will be safer. The person with AD will be able to function better and your job as a caregiver will be less physically and emotionally stressful. The chance of a fall, an accident, and frightening experiences such as having the person in your care wander away from home will be reduced.



A safety gate at the top of stairs can prevent a fall.

### Resource for You

The **Alzheimer’s Foundation of America** created **The Apartment**—a model studio residence built to showcase ways that practical design and technology can greatly increase the quality of life for someone living with dementia and help family care partners protect their loved ones’ safety. Visit, the Alzheimer’s Foundation of America | **The Apartment-A Guide to Creating a Dementia-Friendly Home** ([alzfdn.org](http://alzfdn.org))



## General Home Safety for the Person with AD

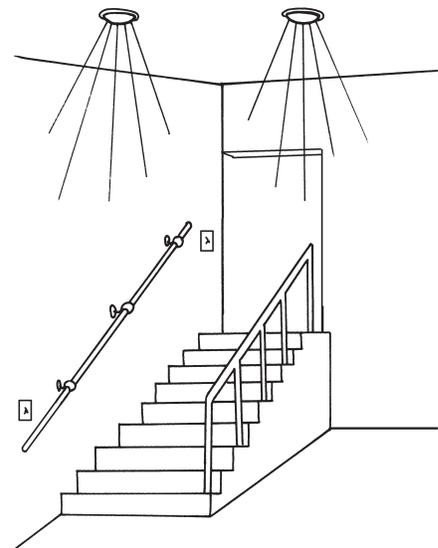
A safe, comfortable home can help a person with Alzheimer's feel more relaxed and less overwhelmed. Try to look at the world through the eyes of a person with AD and *above all focus on preventing accidents, wandering away from home, and emotional upset.*

**Furniture** – Remove any unneeded furniture. Place the remaining furniture so that there is **enough space for a walker or wheelchair** avoiding the need for an elderly or disabled person to move around coffee tables and other barriers. Once the person in your care has gotten used to where the furniture is, do not change it. Make sure furniture will **not move if it is leaned on**. Check that the armrests of a favorite chair are long enough to help the person get up and down. Make chair seats 20" high. **Remove scatter rugs**, which can cause falls. Add **cushioning to sharp corners** and reflector tape on furniture, cabinets, and vanities.

**Lighting** – Plan for extra **outdoor lighting** for good nighttime visibility, especially on stairs and walkways. Use **automatic night-lights** in the rooms used by the person in your care.

Place nonskid tape on the edges of stairs (and consider painting the edge of the first and last step a different color from the floor to help with depth perception). Provide enough **no-glare lighting**—indirect is best. Place light switches next to room entrances so the lights can be turned on before entering a room. Consider “clap-on” lamps beside the bed. Cover smooth or shiny surfaces to **reduce glare**, which upsets or confuses the person with AD. **Eliminate shadows** by creating a uniform level of light with up-lights that reflect off the ceiling. (Ask a lighting store for a lamp that doesn't cast shadows.)

**Signage & Décor** – For those who tend to wander, create a safe path through the home for a “**wander loop**.” Use reflector tape to create a **path to follow from the bedroom to the bathroom** at night. Cover or remove mirrors if they are upsetting to the person with AD, who may not recognize himself. Place **labels on drawers and cabinets**. Decorate the front door so he or she can recognize their house or apartment. To improve the person's mood and help with memory recall, keep items displayed or paintings from former cherished activities such as mountain hikes, seaside vacations or sports.



Be sure stairs are well lit with light switches at both the top and bottom of the stairs.

## Taking Care of Yourself— Dementia Care / Self Care

It is natural for you to have feelings of inadequacy in dealing with the caregiving challenge and heartbroken to be losing the love and friendship of the person you knew. Expect to feel frustrations: from the person's inability to follow instructions and perform daily tasks, which slows the pace of your day; constant repetition of the same phrases or stories; rage, withdrawal, or use of profanity; demands to do things (like driving) that are no longer safe.

You are the engine that will keep things going over the long haul, so take care of yourself by using little techniques. Take brief daytime "power naps."

Arrange respite care and reach out to friends when you need to chat and have a good laugh. Make a nutritious meal and snack plan for yourself so you eat properly, regardless of how busy you are. Even short exercise breaks help keep you fit and emotionally balanced. Try to keep your sense of humor. Alzheimer's is not funny, but amusing things do happen.



## Live Life Laughing!

I'm going in for a hip replacement, but I told my doctor to go ahead and do the face lift too while he is at it.



## Inspiration

*Make your self a priority once in a while. It is not selfish. It is a necessity.*

## Memory Care - Contrasting Colors

An 85-year-old needs about three times the amount of light a 15-year-old needs to see the same thing. Contrasting colors play a big part in seeing well. As much as possible, the color of furniture, toilet seats, counters, etc., should be different from the floor color.

## Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

### Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

### Ordering Info

From the publishers of

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The Comfort of Home®*  
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## SAFETY TIPS— Home Safety

Keep a **telephone and flashlight** where they are easily accessible. Keep **power tools out of reach**. Place protective fireplace screens. Cover exposed **hot-water pipes** and cover radiators with **radiator guards**. Have a carpenter **install railings** in places where a person might need extra support. Consult a physical or occupational therapist for help in placing **grab bars and safety rails**. Place colored **tape on glass doors** and picture windows. Install a sturdy **gate with a lock** on dangerous stairs. Gate must be higher than the person's waist. Baby gates are dangerous as people may try to climb over them. Use **child-proof plugs in electrical outlets**. **Clear fire-escape routes**. Provide **smoke alarms** on every floor and outside every bedroom. Place a **fire extinguisher** in the kitchen. Remove or lock up all **poisonous household items**. Install **safety latches on the doors** and gated exteriors. Install alarms or bells on doors. Lock the cellar and garage doors; hide the **garage remote control**.

**Lock liquor** cabinets. Store **car keys in a locked container**; ask a mechanic to disable the car so you can still use it but the person with AD cannot.

# Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

## Q U I C K Q U I Z

When caring for someone with Alzheimer's (AD) at home you are providing a chance for that person to remain in a familiar, comfortable environment where he can use his strengths and be encouraged to be as independent as possible for as long as possible. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. Alzheimer's disease symptoms get worse as time goes on.  
T F
2. It is difficult for a person with AD to adjust to changes in the environment.  
T F
3. As much as possible, the color of furniture, toilet seats, counters, etc., should be different from the floor color.  
T F
4. A safe, comfortable home can help a person with Alzheimer's feel more relaxed and less overwhelmed.  
T F
5. Once the person in your care has gotten used to where the furniture is, do not change it.  
T F
6. It is not necessary to remove power tools because older people don't know how to operate them.  
T F
7. Glare from windows or tables does *not* upset or confuse the person with AD.  
T F
8. To improve the person's mood and help with memory recall, keep items displayed or paintings from former cherished activities.  
T F
9. As a caregiver, expect to feel frustrations from the person's inability to follow instructions and perform daily tasks, constant repetition of the same phrases or stories, rage, withdrawal, or use of profanity.  
T F
10. Make sure furniture will not move if it is leaned on.  
T F

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_