Home Safety

for People Living with Dementia

As dementia progresses, it becomes more difficult for individuals to safely navigate and manage everyday activities at home. Sensory changes—such as difficulties with sight, hearing, touch, and smell—can increase the risk of accidents. Memory lapses may also mean forgetting things like turning off the oven or how to use the phone in an emergency. Fortunately, many simple and practical changes can make the home environment safer, more comfortable, and easier to live in.

Lighting Matters

Lighting plays a vital role in creating a safe and reassuring home. People with dementia may become easily disoriented in areas that are poorly lit, or where lighting changes suddenly from bright to dark. Shadows, reflections, or glaring lights can create visual confusion, leading to anxiety or even trips and falls.

Maximise natural light by keeping curtains open during the day and trimming back foliage that may block windows.
Use consistent lighting in hallways, stairways, and bathrooms, especially at night.

Avoid sharp contrasts or sudden changes between light and dark areas.
Minimise shadows and reflections by using lamps with soft light bulbs and placing lights carefully to reduce glare from shiny surfaces.

Creating a Calm and Familiar Environment

People with dementia often feel most secure in familiar settings. Significant changes to a home's layout or appearance can be disorienting. Where possible, maintain continuity and avoid large-scale redecorating.

Be mindful of overly busy patterns on wallpapers, carpets or bedding, which can be confusing or even perceived as obstacles.

Mirrors can sometimes be distressing, as individuals may not recognise their own reflection—consider removing or covering them if this becomes an issue.
Limit the number of decorative items or memorabilia, especially if these create visual clutter. A few meaningful items placed carefully can be comforting without being overwhelming.

Visual Clues and Clear Signage

Visual cues can make a big difference in helping someone with dementia move around the home safely and independently. Simple changes can reduce confusion and support a greater sense of control.
Use contrasting colours between floors, walls, and furniture to make objects stand out clearly.
Label cupboards and doors with clear, easy-to-read signs—images alongside words can be especially helpful.
Keep everyday items visible and easy to find, such as placing a favourite cup by the kettle or a toothbrush on the sink.
Display useful information (like daily routines or emergency contacts) in prominent places, like on the fridge or next to the phone.

Alarms and Gas Safety

Safety alarms are essential, especially when memory or sensory changes may affect awareness of risks.

Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in key areas of the home and test them regularly.

For gas cookers, consider fitting cooker locking valves or gas isolation devices that automatically switch off the gas when not in use.

Managing Noise and Creating a Peaceful Atmosphere

Too much background noise can cause stress or sensory overload. At the same time, familiar sounds can bring comfort and reduce anxiety.

Minimise disruptive noise from televisions, radios, or household appliances—especially if more than one is on at once.
Use gentle, familiar sounds, like quiet music or nature sounds, to create a calming environment.

Consider soft furnishings like curtains and cushions, which help absorb sound and reduce echoes in a room.

Living Room Safety

The living room should be a safe and comfortable space for rest and social interaction.

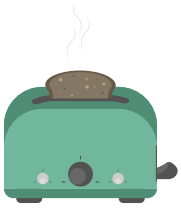
Secure large furniture like bookshelves or TVs to prevent them from tipping if grabbed for support.
Clear floors of clutter and remove potential tripping hazards like electrical cords or footstools.

Be cautious with rugs and mats, as these are common trip risks—either remove them or ensure they have non-slip backing.

Bedroom Safety

Good bedroom safety supports both rest and nighttime independence.
Consider bed rails or grab bars to assist with getting in and out of bed.
Use a room monitor if there are concerns about wandering or falls during the night.
Avoid portable heaters and electric blankets unless there is someone to ensure they're used safely and switched off.
Ensure that nightlights or sensor lights are used for visibility during nighttime trips to the toilet.

Kitchen Safety Tips



The kitchen can be a particularly hazardous area, but simple modifications can help reduce risks.
Use safety knobs or covers on stoves to prevent accidental switching on.
Install an automatic shut-off switch on the cooker to prevent it being left on.
Clearly label cupboards and keep cleaning products or sharp utensils out of sight or locked away.
Regularly check food freshness, as people with dementia may struggle to recognise signs of spoilage.
Avoid artificial fruits or food-shaped magnets, which can be mistaken for real food.

Bathroom Safety

Bathrooms can pose a high risk due to wet, slippery surfaces and confusion around hot water or electrical items.
Install non-slip mats and grab rails near the toilet, shower, or bath.
Keep cleaning products locked away and ensure medications are safely stored.
Secure electrical items like hairdryers and remove them when not in use.
Consider fitting a thermostatic mixing valve to keep water at a safe temperature

Garden and Outdoor Safety

Spending time outdoors can be very beneficial for mood and physical health. However, the garden should be made as secure and accessible as possible.
Ensure walking paths are flat and even, avoiding loose paving or gravel that could cause trips.
Provide comfortable seating in shaded or sheltered areas.
Use fencing and gates to maintain safety and prevent wandering.
Install adequate lighting for use at dusk or during early evening walks.

Where to Find Further Support

If the person with dementia hasn't had one yet, request a needs assessment from your local council. This assessment can help identify necessary support and adaptations in the home. If specific changes like grab rails or stair lifts are needed, the council may arrange a home adaptation assessment to support safety and independence.