

STAYING SAFE: Steps to Take for a Person Living with Dementia



A comprehensive safety plan is important for a person living with Alzheimer's.

Taking measures to improve safety can prevent injuries and help a person living with dementia feel at ease and maintain independence longer.

Visit alz.org/safety for a comprehensive offering of safety information, tips and resources.



Safety at Home

- Evaluate certain areas that may be more prone to safety hazards such as garages, work rooms or basements.
- Take precautions to avoid injuries during daily activities such as ensuring food is not too hot, install walk-in showers, or add texture stickers to slippery surfaces.
- Ensure all areas are well lit.
- Evaluate potentially dangerous objects to make sure they are not easily accessible, i.e. stoves or power tools.
- Keep medication and harmful substances locked away.
- Consider removing weapons from the home.
- Learn how to help prevent falls at Oklahoma.gov/health/falls



Wandering and Getting Lost

Six in 10 people living with dementia will wander and become lost; many do so repeatedly. Signs of wandering behavior:

- Forgetting familiar places.
- Returning from walks or drives later than usual
- Trying to “go home” when already at home.
- Having a hard time locating familiar places.
- Experiencing restlessness.

Tips to reduce wandering:

- Provide opportunities to engage in structured activities throughout the day.
- Encourage exercise.
- Place deadbolts high or low on exterior doors to prevent wandering at night.
- Consider a GPS device if the person drives.
- Reassure the person if he or she feels lost, abandoned or disoriented.



Driving Safety

Driving demands good judgment and quick reaction time. Because of the progressive nature of Alzheimer's, a person living with the disease will eventually become unable to drive. It's helpful to have a conversation early on about how independence can be maintained when the person can no longer drive. Signs it may be time to stop driving:

- Forgetting familiar places.
- Making poor driving decisions such as speeding or missing traffic signals.
- Becoming angry or confused while driving.



Emergency Preparedness

Disaster situations can significantly impact everyone's safety, but they can be especially upsetting and confusing for individuals living with dementia. Being prepared for an emergency is crucial. Prepare an emergency kit that includes:

- Copies of important documents.
- Extra clothes and medication.
- Incontinence products if needed.
- Identification items.
- Water and food.
- A favorite item of the person.

If an emergency occurs and you need to evacuate, make sure your plans are compatible with the specific needs of the person living with dementia. If an individual lives in a residential facility, learn about its disaster and evacuation plans. Find out who is responsible for evacuating the person in the event of an emergency.



Traveling

A dementia diagnosis does not necessarily mean that it's time to stop traveling; however, doing so does require careful planning. The following may help facilitate a safe and enjoyable trip:

- Pack copies of important documents.
- Stick to a familiar destination.
- If staying in a hotel consider informing staff about your specific needs.
- Contact the Alzheimer's Association® to find the nearest office that can provide assistance at your travel destination.

Specifically for Air Travel:

- Avoid flights that require tight connections.
- Consider requesting a wheelchair so that an attendant can help you get from place to place.
- Contact the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to determine if a pass can be issued to family members or friends to escort the passenger through security to their gate terminal.
- Do not hesitate to ask for assistance from airport employees or crew members.
- Stay with the person at ALL times.

Staying safe becomes increasingly important as Alzheimer's disease progresses. Visit alz.org/safety for more information and resources.