

Caregiver Assistance News

“Caring for You - Caring for Others”

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



JUNE 2013

Preparing a Safe Home

Alzheimer's Care - Focus on Accident Prevention

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. This will make it possible for the person with dementia to be as independent as possible.

Creating a Safe Home

Creating a safe home environment for a person with Alzheimer's disease requires changes that would be made for any older person. Also, consider any physical or mental disabilities they may have that are unique to AD and try to plan ahead for future difficulties.

The environment should be suitable for the symptoms of the disease which include:

- Memory loss
- Confusion about where they are
- Confusion about how to find a particular room
- Decreased judgment
- Tendency to wander
- Poor impulse control
- Changes in vision, hearing, and depth perception

- Sensitivity to changes in temperature

You can't predict every need that will come along. AD symptoms become 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 or severe 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.

Make Changes Slowly

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. For this reason, 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 becoming used to them.

If you are making changes to a home, be aware and sensitive to what these possessions mean to the person and proceed with sen-



sitivity.

The Kitchen

The kitchen is filled with potential trouble spots. A person who is used to cooking may want to continue to do so, but forget to turn off the flame when the food is done, may make the flame too high, or may not position pots safely on the stove top. At first, simply keeping close watch may be enough to reduce these risks. In time, as the disease progresses, it may be necessary to remove the knobs from the stove or to cover them so the person in your care will not notice them.

- Remove all items that cause confusion.

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- Disguise the garbage disposal switches.
- Place all the garbage out of sight.
- Place labels on the cabinets.
- Install a shut-off valve (for a gas stove) or a circuit breaker for an electric stove so that you can disable it when you leave the kitchen.
- Remove burner knobs and tape the stems or install knob covers.
- Use a lock-out switch on the electric range so that it can't be turned on except by you.
- Use an aluminum cover over the top of the stove, or use burner covers.
- Replace the pilot on a gas stove with an electric starter.
- Lock the oven door.
- Use safety latches on doors and cabinets.
- Install gates, a door or dutch doors so that the kitchen can be closed off, but you can still see and be seen.
- Install an automatic turn-off on the faucet.
- Install a governor on the hot water faucet (or turn down the valve under the sink) to control the amount of water that can be used.
- For a faucet spout that swings outside the sink itself, install a brace that keeps water in the sink at all times.
- Hide or discard dangerous small appliances.
- Turn off appliances by unplugging them, turning off circuit breakers, or removing fuses.
- Install smoke detectors (but not near the stove).
- Use an electric tea kettle that has an automatic shutoff.

- Use a single-lever faucet that can balance water temperature.
- Provide an area away from the knife drawer and stove where the person in your care can help prepare food.

- Ask the gas company to modify your stove to provide a gas odor that is strong enough to alert you if the pilot light goes out.
- Provide a step stool, never a chair, to reach high shelves.

Have a chronic disease such as asthma, arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, or other life-long conditions?

Want to better manage your conditions and feel healthier??

Put Life Back Into Your Life with....

Healthy U



Healthy U is a small group workshop that meets once a week for six weeks.

With Healthy U, you'll gain support and:

- Learn ways to deal with pain, fatigue and depression
- Discover ways to be more physically active
- Learn how to eat healthier
- Learn better ways to talk with your physician and family about your health
- Set personal goals
- Find ways to relax and deal with stress

The class is FREE and participants will receive a FREE copy of "Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions," a 374-page guide to self-management.

Locally, the Area Agency on Aging District 7 is happy to sponsor Healthy U at a location near you. For more information about joining an upcoming class, call **1-800-582-7277, extension 215 or 254.**

The program is made possible by a joint effort of the Administration on Aging, the Ohio Department of Health, the Ohio Department of Aging, Area Agency on Aging District 7, and the National Council on Aging.



Don't Fall - Be Safe!! - To help avoid taking a misstep, you can paint wooden or concrete steps with a strip of contrasting color on the edge of each step or on the top and bottom steps. Don't rush going up or down stairs. Rushing is a major cause of falls.

"Never question the meaning of taking a few steps backwards. After all, dancing through life gracefully requires a full range of motion." - Ruth Marcus, Ph.D.

Taking Care of Yourself

No Nightcaps for Better Sleep

Alcohol helps you fall asleep quickly and deepens sleep initially, but later on, it disrupts sleep and causes middle-of-the-night wake-ups. Overall, it produces unsettled sleep. High doses of alcohol worsen sleep more in women. It's not surprising that there's a gender effect at night, since women metabolize alcohol differently than men. The stomach enzyme that breaks down alcohol before it reaches the bloodstream is less active in women. This allows more alcohol to enter the blood. Women also end up with higher blood alcohol levels because they tend to be smaller and have proportionately less body water than men (alcohol is diluted in body water). Alcohol's effects on sleep may be even worse in older people and those with sleep problems. Don't use alcohol to help you sleep.



Source: Berkeley Wellness Alerts

Upcoming Alzheimer's Association Workshops

Understanding and Dealing with Alzheimer's Disease or Another Dementia

alzheimer's
association®

These programs will provide an opportunity for families and caregivers to learn and ask questions about Alzheimer's disease and dementia, while receiving support from others in similar situations. You are invited to attend any or all of the programs listed below. Programs are free of charge. No registration required.

Scioto County - Best Care Nursing and Rehab in Wheelersburg from 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Remaining Topics: August 13th - Caregiver/Family Stress and Grief • October 8th - Safety Considerations
December 10th - Activities and Interaction

Gallia County - 2881 SR 160 (HMC Thaler Building) in Gallipolis from 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

Remaining Topics: July 23rd - Dealing with Behavioral Challenges
September 24th - Caregiver/Family Stress and Grief • November 19th - Safety Considerations
January 28, 2014 - Activities and Interaction

What Families Need to Know...When the Diagnosis is Alzheimer's or Related Dementia

This series of educational sessions provides an opportunity for families to learn and share together in an informal setting. Topics are presented by experts in their fields, including physicians, nurses, social workers and attorneys. Session topics include: The Nature and Progression of the Disease, Changes in Communications and Behavior, Legal Planning for Families, and Family Coping Strategies and Community Resources. The two-part series is free of charge, but reservations must be made in advance. Please call the number listed at the bottom of this box.

Adams – August 19 and 26 from 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm at Adams County Regional Medical Center in Seaman

Highland – September 23 and 30 from 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm at Highland District Hospital in Hillsboro

Jackson (for Gallia/Jackson/Vinton Counties) – July 10 and 17 from 12:30 pm - 3:30 pm at Holzer Medical Center - Jackson

Scioto – August 14 and 21 from 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm at the Vern Riffe Community Center in New Boston

For more information about these programs and other similar programs available in or near your community, or for assistance with registering, please call Melissa Dever, LSW, from the Alzheimer's Association, at (740) 710-1821.



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Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a nurse or social worker who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at info@aaa7.org.

Safety Tips - Outdoor Areas

Safe outdoor areas are important, especially for those who are confused and mobile. Safety features should include the following:

- Ramps for access on ground that is not level or even
- A deck with a sturdy railing
- Outside doors locked or alarmed
- A key hidden outside
- Enough light to see walkway hazards at night
- Non-slip step surfaces in good repair
- Stair handrails fastened to their fittings
- Step edges marked with reflective paint
- A hedge or fence around the yard and dangerous areas like pools or streams
- Unplugging or removing power tools.

