

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!**



JANUARY 2023

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.

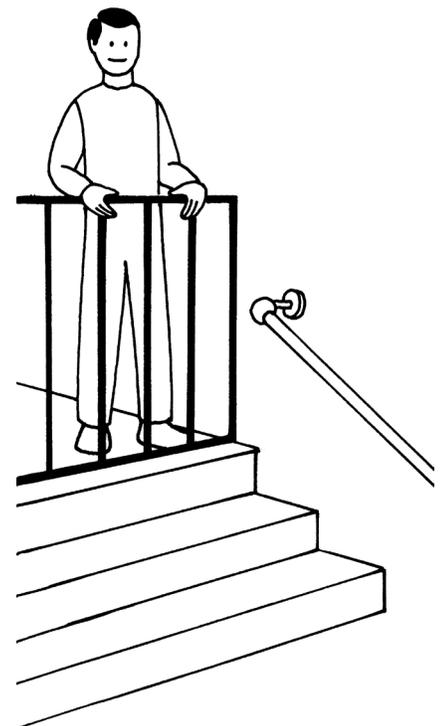
Not all changes to the home need to be

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.

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)*



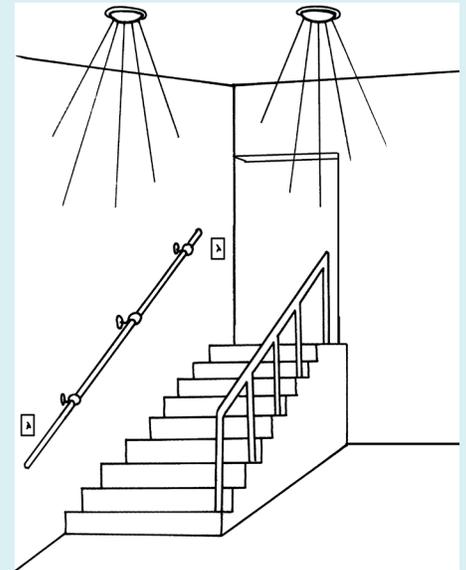
A safety gate at the top of the stairs can prevent a fall.

General Home Safety for the Person with Alzheimer’s Disease

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 older 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.



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

Place non-skid 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 or herself. Place labels on drawers and cabinets. Decorate the front door so that 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.

Our Resource Center is OPEN and available to answer your questions about home and community-based resources in your community!



1-800-582-7277
info@aaa7.org

HEAP Home Energy Assistance Program

Now open for applications for 2022-2023. This program can help eligible Ohioans manage their heating bills. Applications are available from your local Community Action Agency

If interested or if you have questions, contact your county Community Action Agency or the AAA7 Resource Center at 1-800-582-7277.

Taking Care of Yourself

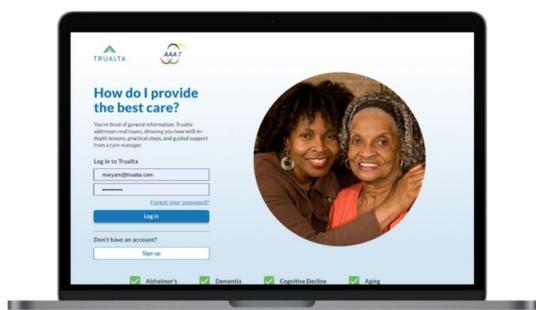
Dementia Care/Self-Care

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; and 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.

Trualta helps families learn skills to manage care at home, provided for free by AAA7



- You can register today to access an **interactive eLearning environment**
- Short, quick lessons created by experts in aging
- Easy to use for all ages, completely private and **accessible 24/7**
- **No app required**, view on any browser, laptop, phone or tablet

The AAA7 is excited to offer this interactive opportunity to caregivers to support them in their caregiving role at no charge!

Sign up today!

aaa7.trualta.com



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.

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 Alzheimer's disease cannot.

Some content in this publication is excerpted from The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented, or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.



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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 trained Resource Specialist 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.