

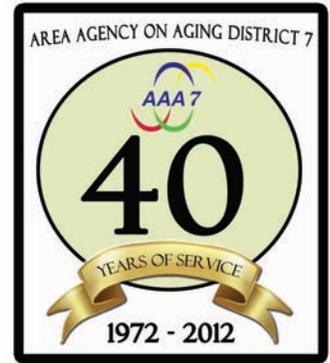
Caregiver Assistance News

"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 2012

Home Safety - Bedroom and Outdoor Areas

The Bedroom

If the person in your care spends a lot of time in the bedroom, make it comfortable, convenient and safe.

Good lighting makes a room cheerful, makes moving around easier, and reduces the risk of falls and medication errors. If the room doesn't have much natural daylight, install sturdy floor lamps (position them in a corner where they won't be knocked over), wall-mounted lamps, or lamps that attach firmly to the bed frame. Avoid table lamps that can tip over, break and cause fires. Most light bulbs become hot, so use light fixtures that shield the bulb from fingers. Night lights in the bedroom, in the hallway just outside the bedroom, and in the nearest bathroom are also important. For daytime naps, use light-blocking blinds. Keep blind cords looped up or knotted to avoid tripping hazards.

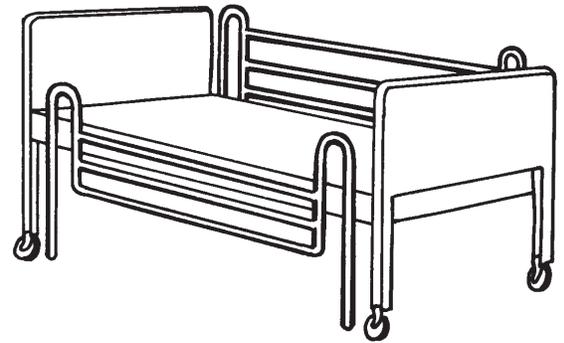
Make sure the bed is comfortable, according to the person's preference. Keep heaters clean and clear of furnishings, drapes and bedding. Sleep is enhanced when the room is slightly cooler (about 65° F). Fresh air is important. Crack

open windows in nice weather and air the room frequently.

A bedside table should be sturdy, large enough to accommodate whatever the person needs, and at a comfortable height and distance from the bed. Always keep a flashlight within easy reach. Unless the person in your care is bedridden, encourage them to sit in a comfortable chair - not the bed - when watching TV or listening to the radio. To avoid insomnia, the bed should only be used for sleeping - not eating, working or watching TV. That same comfortable, sturdy chair is also helpful when dressing, and can be used as a balance or support aid in transferring or moving around the room.

A portable commode is helpful for a person with limited mobility. The portable commode (with the pail removed) can be used over the toilet seat and as a shower seat.

The mattress should be firm, a comfortable height - about 22 inches is good - and placed securely against a wall. If the bed has wheels, lock them. If blocks are used to raise its



height, make sure they are secure.

Bed guard rails may be helpful when moving in and out of bed, but may add to the risk of falls if the person attempts to climb over them. Consult with a physical therapist about the best way to use them - if at all - for the person in your care. A bed cane may be a safer alternative; it has a wooden base that fits between the mattress and box spring and a grab bar above. If the person in your care is frequently up at night, place an alarm mat beside the bed, use an infrared sensor beam to sound an alarm when they cross the beam, or attach a motion sensor to clothing. For those who wander, lower the bed height by removing cast-

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Home Safety - continued from Page 1

ers, box springs, or legs, and place the dresser at the end of the bed. If necessary, install a monitor to listen to activity in the room.

Also consider adding:

- A fish tank, to provide entertainment and relaxation.
- A bulletin board with pictures of family and friends hung where it

can be easily seen.

- A calendar and an easy-to-read alarm clock to keep the person oriented to date and time.

Outdoor Areas

Safe outdoor areas are important, especially for those who are frail, but still mobile. Safety features include:

- ✓ Ramps instead of steps
- ✓ Sturdy railings on decks and porches
- ✓ Alarmed or locked outside doors
- ✓ Good lighting, to illuminate walkway hazards
- ✓ Non-slip step surfaces in good repair
- ✓ Stair handrails
- ✓ Step edges marked with reflective paint
- ✓ A hedge or fence around the yard, and sturdy fencing around dangerous areas like pools or streams



A periodic safety check identifies items that need attention and can be a reminder of safety behaviors you need to follow:

- ✓ Remove power tools after use
- ✓ Keep steps and sidewalks clear and free from toys, tools, ice and snow
- ✓ Keep the yard free of sharp objects
- ✓ Keep lawn in good repair
- ✓ Keep clotheslines strung high so no one walks into them
- ✓ Keep gas and charcoal grills clean; use with caution

Doors, Windows and Steps

Because a person with Alzheimer's may try to leave the house on their own:

- ✓ Install an electric eye device that rings when someone goes out
- ✓ Install a lock close to the floor, where it is less noticeable
- ✓ Cover the door knob to make it difficult to grasp and open
- ✓ Use decals to hide or disguise the door
- ✓ Lock sliding doors
- ✓ Install window guards
- ✓ Consider installing a keypad lock that requires the user to enter a code to open the door

The Area Agency on Aging District 7 Caregiver Support Program can provide you with more information on home safety resources. Call us toll-free at 1-800-582-7277 to learn more.

"Never underestimate your problem or your ability to deal with it." - Robert H. Schuller

Taking Care of Yourself **Exercise - It's Easy!**

If your schedule leaves little time for formal exercise, try these tips for finding more action into your daily routine:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park at the back of the parking lot and walk to the store or your workplace.
- Get off one bus or subway stop before your usual one and walk the rest of the way.
- Exercise while watching TV.
- Turn on the radio and dance, dance, dance.
- Stretch, bend and move while cleaning the house.

Remember, exercise doesn't have to be done in a gym or involve sets of repetitive moves. Anything that has you up and moving works:

- Work in the yard or garden.
- Sweep the porch, sidewalk or driveway.
- Join a "mall walkers" group or aerobics class.
- Walk around the zoo or a museum.
- Just take a walk!!



Live Life Laughing



A positive attitude may not solve all your problems, but it will annoy enough people to make it worth the effort.

Telephone Reassurance

Some communities provide a free telephone reassurance service (TRS).

TRS makes a brief daily call to elderly or disabled persons to reassure them and share crime prevention information.

To inquire about similar programs in your area, call the Area Agency on Aging District 7 toll-free at 1-800-582-7277.





Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

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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.

Happy Feet Prevent Falls

Every year, one in three Americans will take a tumble, and risk increases with age. Most falls result in no or only minor injuries, but those who do suffer severe injuries risk permanently losing independence and mobility.

Healthy feet prevent falls. As we age, the foot's muscle tissue thins, blood circulation decreases, nerves become less sensitive, the cushioning tissues on the soles becomes less springy, arches start to fall, and the foot flattens and spreads. Older toes tend to curl because of weak muscles, and corns, bunions and tender spots are frequent. Because diabetes damages the foot's nerves, diabetics are at particular risk of foot problems.

Sore feet are a major reason for unsteady gait and poor balance, and most elderly people who fell reported that they had chronically aching feet.

Footwear is the single most important factor in foot health. Getting the right size is vital. A good orthopedic shoe specialist will help with finding good shoes for older feet, and the trained staff at sporting goods stores can also help.



Source: Harvard Health Letter