

For a person living with dementia the physical environment is important to help keep them safe, comfortable, and independent. Simple adjustments can make home life easier.

General Hints

- Remove trip hazards and sharp edges, as awareness and eyesight fade.
- Colours may appear dimmer, so aim for a difference in shade between walls and floor.
- Ensure electrical cords are covered or retractable cords.
- Ensure house is well lit to reduce the risk of falls.
- If natural light is deficient, think about installing dimmer lights as the person may find dark areas or shadows confusing.
- Think about flood detectors that sound an alarm if there is a tap running.
- Put signs on taps to show which is hot and which is cold.
- Think about a fall detector alarm.
- Be mindful of external noises as they may become amplified.
- Remove clutter.
- In general, use contrasting colours, but keep patterns to a minimal e.g., a red plate on a white placemat or painting the toilet door a different colour.
- Décor patterns may create visual confusion, with clashing patterns presenting an overstimulated environment increasing agitation.
- Try to leave doors open, and/or add simple signs, as when rooms are visible, it's easier to navigate the way through the home.
- Consider putting up simple one-word signs (food or kitchen) or pictures (a toilet or a bed) with an arrow pointing the way to those rooms.
- Avoid leaving doors open to rooms that are not used.
- Add orienting items like an easy-to-understand clock and calendar.
- Add photos or mementos locks that evoke positive memories.
- Use adaptive utensils such as cups with lids and plate guards.
- Check the safety of, floors, doors, windows, stairs, and balconies etc. to see if they need modifying.
- Install sensor lights if the person wanders at night.
- Mark glass doors and windows with masking tape.

Toilet

- Consider putting in a contrasting toilet seat or cover to draw attention to it. White toilets may blend in with the floor and walls.
- For some older men, it can be tough to keep the toilet area clean when urinating. Missing the bowl also means increased cleaning for the carer. Adding an obvious mark inside the bowl may assist them see where they should be aiming.

What About TV?

Television can be a source of stimulation and entertainment but needs to be monitored to ensure it is appropriate. Suitable shows may include game shows, familiar sitcoms, nature documentaries, or shows based around individual interests.

Carers should endeavour to provide a balanced routine for the person, being mindful that a continual barrage of noise and images may be overwhelming. Often it is better for the person living with dementia to watch TV with another person rather than alone.

News and current affairs programmes have the potential to increase anxiety or changed behaviours if the person is unable to understand the information shown. Even if they don't fully recognise what's being presented, they are still able to detect the tone of a topic and may mistake TV shows for reality.

When deciding on TV shows consider the sounds, images and tempo of the show. If you observe an increase in anxiety or restlessness this may indicate time for other activity.

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