

# LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY COALITION

*Advancing Quality, Dignity & Justice*

## HOME SAFETY FOR INDIVIDUALS LIVING WITH DEMENTIA FACT SHEET FOR INDIVIDUALS LIVING AT HOME OR IN ASSISTED LIVING

Home should be a place of comfort, familiarity, and dignity – especially for someone living with dementia. As dementia progresses, everyday spaces can become confusing or even dangerous, but small changes can make a big difference.

This fact sheet offers practical, person-centered tips to help caregivers and families create a safer, more supportive environment – whether at home or in assisted living. By adapting the space to meet changing needs, individuals living with dementia can maintain independence and continue to thrive in the place they know best. For more resources, please visit our website, <https://nursinghome411.org/dementia-care-in-the-community>.

### How Dementia Affects Safety

Dementia can impact thinking, movement, behavior, and sensory perception, leading to increased safety concerns:

- **Judgment:** Difficulty using household appliances or managing routine tasks safely.
- **Orientation:** Confusion about time and place can result in getting lost, even in familiar surroundings.
- **Behavioral Changes:** Feelings of fear, suspicion, or agitation may arise.
- **Physical Ability:** Difficulty with balance can increase the risk of falls.
- **Sensory Changes:** Vision, hearing, and temperature sensitivity may be altered, making it harder to perceive hazards.

### Home Safety Tips

To prevent accidents and create a safer environment, consider the following strategies:

#### 1. Evaluate the Environment

- Regularly check high-risk areas such as garages, basements, and workrooms where tools, chemicals, and cleaning products are stored.
- Remove clutter and tripping hazards like throw rugs or cords.
- Review your home safety setup every few months and adjust as needed.

#### 2. Kitchen Safety

- Use appliances that turn off automatically and secure stove knobs to prevent dangerous usage.
- Keep medications, toxic plants, and other hazardous items out of reach.
- Use labels with pictures or words on cabinets to support independence.

#### 3. Bathroom and Bedroom Safety

- Install grab bars in the bathroom and consider adding non-slip surfaces to reduce the risk of falls.

- Keep the bedroom organized and ensure that furniture is secure to prevent tipping.

#### 4. **Lighting and Visibility**

- Place additional lighting in hallways, bathrooms, and stairways to avoid disorientation, especially at night.
- Install night lights and motion sensor lights in key areas like hallways and entries to make navigating the home safer.

**Note:** Maintaining a safe home requires energy and attention. **Caregivers need care, too.** Take breaks, seek support, and consider respite services. A well-supported caregiver is essential to a safe and stable home environment.

#### 5. **Doors, Windows, and Wandering Prevention**

- Install locks on doors and windows that are out of sight to prevent wandering.
- Use secure storage for keys and ensure that locks inside the house are removed to avoid entrapment.

#### 6. **Emergency Preparedness**

- Have emergency contact information (e.g., local police, hospitals) easily accessible.
- Ensure that smoke detectors, carbon monoxide alarms, and fire extinguishers are functional, and replace batteries regularly.

#### 7. **Medication and Chemical Safety**

- Store medications in a locked cabinet and consider using a pill organizer to ensure proper dosage.
- Keep harmful chemicals, such as cleaning supplies or pesticides, securely stored away.

#### 8. **Garage and Outdoor Areas**

- Limit access to dangerous tools, such as lawnmowers or snow blowers.
- Ensure chemicals like gasoline or paint are stored in safe, out-of-reach locations.

#### 9. **Support Independence**

- Maintain a balance between ensuring safety and encouraging independence.
- Create spaces for social interaction and activity to prevent isolation.

### **Additional Support Services**

- **Dementia Care Coordinators:** These professionals assist with evaluating the home for safety hazards and providing resources for caregivers.
- **Medical Alert Programs:** Enrolling in medical alert services can provide peace of mind by offering emergency support if needed.
- **In-Home Community Services:** Home care aides, nurses, and meal delivery services can help with daily tasks, allowing caregivers more time for self-care.