

## Preparing the Home & Safety Guidelines

The goal in preparing the home for a person with early onset Alzheimer's disease is to keep the surroundings as familiar as possible. By making adaptations to the home, you are creating a safer environment and helping your loved one remain independent for as long as possible. All of these items do not have to be changed at once, and some may not apply to your living situation. You know your loved one better than anyone. Look at each room in your home through the eyes of your loved one to determine what can be changed to ensure their safety and security.

### General Safety

- \* Ensure there are working smoke detectors located throughout the home.
- \* Remove throw rugs, especially in the bathroom, as they can create a fall hazard. (Tip: if you wish to have the bathroom carpeted, adhesive carpet squares are great. They are easy to put down and if one gets stained, you can replace it with a new square.)
- \* Keep a flashlight where it is easily available in case of a power outage.
- \* If there are guns in the home, it is best to remove them. However, if this cannot be done, then they should be locked in a fire-proof safe or have the firing pins removed.
- \* Keep a list of emergency telephone numbers by each telephone.
- \* Keep areas free of clutter to decrease risk of falling.
- \* Keep power tools and other dangerous equipment in a place that is not accessible to the person with Alzheimer's disease.
- \* Place decorative decals on picture windows or patio doors, to keep your loved one from walking into the glass.
- \* Use automatic night-lights in the rooms used by the person with Alzheimer's disease (i.e. bedroom, bathroom)
- \* Consider using a monitor (i.e. baby monitor) as the disease progresses.
- \* Remove or lock up all poisonous household items. Colorful cleaning products may be mistaken for food.
- \* Use the brightest bulbs possible in lamps. This helps decrease shadows, which can be unsettling to the person with Alzheimer's disease.

## **Kitchen**

- Make sure there is a working fire extinguisher located in the kitchen.
- Clean out the refrigerator on a weekly basis and discard food items that have expired or are inedible.
- As the disease progresses, you may need to place knives and sharp objects out of reach or utilize safety devices, such as child-proof locks, to limit access to these items.
- Put all garbage out of sight. Tops and keep cleaning supplies in a locked place.
- Remove spices or medicines from the counter
- If needed, you can put labels on the cabinets and drawers (i.e. plates, glasses, forks, spoons, etc.)
- As the disease progresses, it may be necessary to remove the knobs from the stove or cover them so that the person in your care will not notice them.

## **Bathroom**

- If you do not have a walk-in shower, then it is recommended that you get a shower chair with an extension that sits both inside and outside of the bathtub. This will help decrease the fall risk. These can be purchased at Walgreen's.
- Install grab bars in the bathtub/shower area
- Mark "Hot" and "Cold" above the faucets. It is recommended that you monitor the water temperature for your loved one as they may have decreased sensitivity to temperature.
- Place nonskid decals on the bottom of the bathtub to make tub less slippery.
- If it becomes difficult for your loved one to stand up from the toilet, you can place a raised toilet seat (with handles) over the toilet and it can make it easier for them to get up. These can be purchased at most Walgreen's.
- Put wastebaskets out of sight (in a cabinet). As the disease progresses, your loved one may mistake them for the toilet and try to sit on them and urinate.
- Remove or disable locks on bathroom doors.
- If your loved one struggles to find the bathroom, you can place a picture of a toilet on the wall outside of the bathroom.