

Making your home more dementia friendly



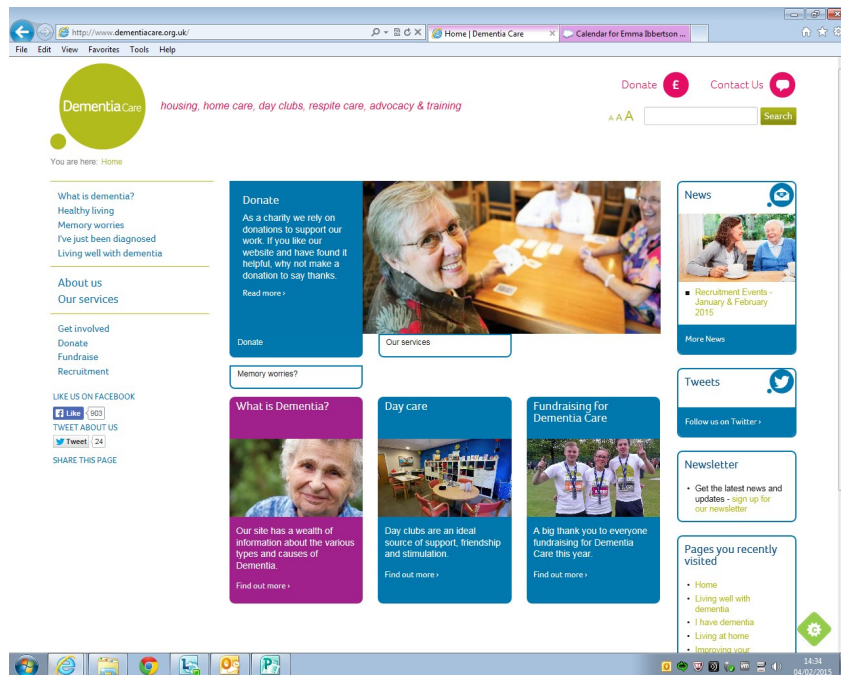
Making your home more dementia friendly

Most people with dementia continue to live happily at home for a long time. However, you will probably need extra support as time goes by. Changes usually happen slowly, so you will have time to make adaptations and find what works for you. There are plenty of simple things you can do, plus a wide range of gadgets and clever bits of technology to help you.

A person with dementia may start to have changes in visual perception and struggle with reflections and colour contrasts, they may also need more visual prompts.

The sooner you start to think about changing your home to make it easier in the future for you and your carer the better. This will enable you to be involved in choices about fixtures, fittings and furniture and enable you time to get used to things changing around you. This booklet goes through each room in a standard house, lounge, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom and garden, each room will have tips on what you can do to make things a little easier. If you have any concerns or questions it may be helpful to talk to a representative of Alzheimer's Society.

You can also view the interactive house and get more information on living well with dementia online at www.dementiacare.org.uk.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the DementiaCare website. The browser address bar displays <http://www.dementiacare.org.uk/>. The website features a green circular logo with the text "DementiaCare" and a tagline "housing, home care, day clubs, respite care, advocacy & training". Navigation links for "Donate" and "Contact Us" are visible. A search bar is present. The main content area includes sections for "What is dementia?", "Donate", "Our services", "News" (with a sub-heading "Recruitment Events - January & February 2015"), "Tweets", "Newsletter", and "Pages you recently visited". The "Pages you recently visited" list includes: Home, Living well with dementia, I have dementia, Living at home, and Improving your. The website is displayed on a Windows operating system interface.

In the Lounge



1. Help with information - Have a clock that also tells you the time and date.

2. Help with reminders - Put up a calendar with plenty of space for writing notes and appointments.

3. Help remember visitors - Have a visitors book and ask them to write their name and contact details and a brief description of what they talked about when they visited.

4. Natural light - Keep the curtain's open during the day

5. See outside - Keep the windows clean.

6. Safer and brighter lighting - Increase the wattage of light bulbs, making sure you don't exceed the safe limit for the lampshade or lamp fittings. Consider buying a standard lamp or having wall mounted uplighters fitted.

7. List phone numbers - Keep a typed list of important phone numbers, and those of relatives and friends, by the telephone. If the person is on their own and needs to make a call, they won't have to search for numbers. You could add photographs to the numbers so they are easier to recognise.

8. Television - Put the TV remotes in easy, visible reach and always put them back in the same place. Consider restricting viewing if some types of programme are disturbing to some people. Look for box sets of favourite programmes from the past — and watch these together or with other family. Switch the TV or radio off if you are not listening to it. Try playing music, or invest in a set of over the ear headphones, or an iPod.

9. Chairs - Make sure chairs are comfortable, and high enough for people to get in and out of (chairs with piped cushions can be uncomfortable to older people).

10. Help with reading - If people are finding reading difficult, bigger sized text books, or talking books can be helpful. A number of people with dementia still enjoy looking at cartoons. Contact your local library for information on what's available, what you can order in and what might be helpful.

11. Safety - Remove items that are trip hazards and tape down or remove rugs etc, particularly those on a wooden or laminate floor. Replace low coffee tables with trolleys or tray tables. Make sure cables and wires don't trail across floors.

12. Prompt memories - Place familiar items around the room i.e. photographs, pictures or objects associated with the person (something they have made or drawn will recollect positive memories). Have a life story or memory box available to use as aids to prompt memory.

13. Patterns - Make sure the furnishings are not too patterned or have clashing colours, as this can be disturbing. Avoid wavy lines, contrast stripes on floors (these can be seen as steps) or changes of colour on floors between rooms. Cover or remove any mirrors if this becomes a problem.

14. Keep familiar objects - Don't buy new furniture or materials unless you have to, as these can be disorientating to people.

15. Redecorate - If you can afford it, consider redecorating your rooms, and involving people in choosing colours and furniture at the early stages of dementia.

16. Colours - Replace white light sockets and light switches with coloured ones.

17. Avoid reflections - Draw the curtains at night to avoid reflections on the window panes.

18. Handy Gadgets - You can also look at getting gadgets such as walking trolleys (to help move things such as magazines and cups of tea, from room to room) and one-handled tray (for example, for someone who uses a walking stick) to help move things around the house.

In the Kitchen



1. Help with reminders - Make a to-do list, or use a reminder board, for the person's daily routines and appointments, and make sure the person reads it every morning. Keep important things such as keys, glasses, money in the same place, so the person knows where to find them.

2. Familiar and accessible - Buy food people will recognise in packets that are familiar. Use see-through storage jars, and keep the most used items like (tea, coffee, mugs and sugar) in visual sight on work surface. Keep surfaces clear except for the things the person uses a lot.

3. Shopping delivery - Consider getting an internet shop for the major items you need, and just go shopping for smaller day-to-day items. This gets you out of the house, and is less time-consuming and stressful than trying to do a big shop.

4. Keep people involved - Keep people involved in cooking and preparing their own food, even if you have to help them to complete the task.

5. Kitchen safety - Investigate getting temperature limiters fitted to the tap, shut-off valves, gas detectors, fitted. For more information visit the assistive technology section.

6. Helping to eat healthy - Mix the colours of your food to make a contrast (particularly avoiding all white or pale food), use plain plates, and if you have white crockery, use coloured table mats. Consider using a plastic table cloth. Have plenty of easily accessible but healthy food available such as fruit and nuts. Drink plenty of fluids.

7. Handy gadgets - Food preparation and eating meals. Try using the following gadgets, which might help when people are a bit unsteady: — clamps and holders to keep jars steady so they can be opened easily — kettle tipper that helps someone pour hot water safely — non-tip cups — timer to remind the person when something that's cooking will be ready.

8. Safety - Keep cleaning fluids, bleach, white spirit etc in cupboards where the person won't look. Even better if the cupboards are lockable.

9. Help with routine - Get a tablet dosette box, with divisions for the days of the week, and different times of day.

10. See contents - Change kitchen cupboard doors to glass, or remove them altogether. Both ways they'll be able to see what's inside.

11. Label the contents - Label drawers with cards or Post-it Notes, or find some colourful photographs or pictures eg. pots and pans for a kitchen drawer, bottles of milk for the fridge, a washing line for the washing machine.

In the Bedroom



1. Bedside lamp - Put a lamp next to the person's bed - consider one with a motion sensor so it doesn't have to be switched on, or one where you can touch the base rather than use a switch.

2. Label sockets and switches - Replace original white sockets and switches with coloured ones. Place coloured sticky labels on sockets and switches.

3. Label drawers - Label drawers with cards or Post-it Notes, or find some colourful photographs or pictures e.g. bright red socks for a bedroom drawer, pots and pans for a kitchen drawer, bottles of milk for the fridge, a washing line for the washing machine.

4. Door signage - Put colourful signs, or appropriate pictures, on doors. Make sure that they're at the right height for the person to see. Leave the doors to the most commonly used rooms open e.g. bathroom, toilet, sitting room.

5. Toilet safety - People with dementia can't always find the bathroom or toilet in the night: if it's possible, arrange their bed so the person can see the toilet. Obviously this is easier with en-suite bathrooms. Leave the corridor and/or bathroom light on or use low-level night lights to show the way.

6. Unnecessary mirrors - Some people with dementia don't always recognise themselves and think the person is a stranger, which can be frightening. Remove, or cover up, unnecessary mirrors.

7. Curtains - Draw the curtains at night to avoid reflections on the window panes. Drawing the curtains helps ensure that people know it's night time and cuts out any distractions outside the window. Equally, it's important that curtains are drawn during the day so that everyday routines are maintained.

8. Tidy up - Make sure slippers and other footwear are tidied away.

9. Cover contrast and bedding hygiene - Contrast bedding with the floor (don't have white bedding with cream carpets, for example) so that they can see the difference. Use waterproof bedding covers including for the duvet. Make sure you have enough to go around.

If bedding (or clothes) gets soiled, make sure you wash any bits off in the utility room or bathroom (not the kitchen) before you put in the washing machine, and use a pre-rinse programme. Wash at 60C or above. Keep soiled linen in sealed bags if not washing immediately, and handle as little as possible.

Make sure you wash your hands thoroughly and ensure that any cuts are covered — if needed, use gloves (and clean these with bleach afterwards), or use disposable gloves from your pharmacist. Consider using an oxygen releasing or bleaching agent in the wash. Wash duvets every three months. If someone has an infection, wash their clothes separately and not with yours.

10. Separate bedrooms? - If you are both having disturbed sleep, consider having separate bedrooms. This may be more relaxing and less distracting for both of you, but only if it feels right.

11. Motion sensors - Consider having sensors fitted to the bed or wall, so you know if someone has got out of bed in the night. Visit our section on assistive technology by [clicking here](#). The radio based ones are cheaper and often more effective as they detect people when getting out of bed if positioned correctly.

12. Clothing - Consider arranging the clothes for the next day in an easy to reach place (on a clothes hanger on the wardrobe, or on a chair), encouraging the person to choose their own clothes and talk them through getting dressed, encouraging them to do this themselves. If you take over and dress people, they will stop trying. When people can't dress themselves any more, remember what was important to them in their dress/appearance, and try to keep this up. People still like having their hair done, and it will make them feel better. Don't make life too difficult for yourself - slip on shoes and clothing without lots of buttons is easier for people to wear. If the person wants to put clothes on that they've just taken off, remove them straight away from sight.

13. Consider the bed - If you need a new bed, you might consider a height-adjustable bed and infection control mattress — many of these are reasonably priced and look like normal bedroom furniture. You might be able to sell the bed when you don't want it any more. Your Occupational Therapist or local carers centre may be able to recommend companies closer to you.

In the Bathroom



1. Lights - Use night lights to help the person find their way if they get up to go to the toilet in the night. Leave the bathroom light on during the night.

2. Locks - Remove any locks from bathroom or toilet doors.

3. Help to see objects - Put stickers in the basin if its white.

4. Floors - Make sure hard-surfaced floors, such as in kitchens and bathrooms, aren't shiny. A person with dementia may think the floor is wet and get anxious or move unsteadily.

5. Have things within reach - Make sure the loo roll holder is at the side or front of the toilet, within easy reach, rather than tucked around the back, and change the loo paper from white to a coloured one.

6. Use colours to assist - Consider changing the colour of the toilet seat and lid to something bright and contrasting; red, for example. This makes it easier to see and for someone to position themselves before sitting down. You might want to consider a raised seat if your toilet is quite low.

7. Familiar items - Keep their flannel and towel visible next to the sink — and use ones that are always the same so people with dementia recognise this as theirs.

8. Taps and safety - Taps can be awkward to turn on, or, if it's a mixer tap, people may find it hard to control the temperature: old-fashioned, 'cross-top' taps, labelled Hot and Cold are easy to turn and identify. Ask a plumber to fit a limiter, so the hot water can't burn.

9. Safety in the bath and shower - Consider having a seat and grab rails fitted in the shower, or the latter in a bath. Use non-slip mats.

10. How to assist - If you need to assist people in the shower, do so with dignity and show respect to the person you are helping. Try to understand people's routines, what they like and don't like and stick to them. Make sure you have towels and clothes handy.

Ask people's permission to assist them and never force them to do something — if they get agitated, distract them by putting something else in their hands such as a book or sponge, talk to them or or play soothing music if they like this. Talk to people whilst you are helping to reassure them, and try to inject some humour into the situation. Don't overfill the bath — 6 inches will be enough and use bubble bath or perfume if people like the smell.

In the Garden



1. **Safety light** - Have an outside light fitted, but don't leave it on when the persons in the house, as they might be attracted by it and go and investigate.

2. **Visible steps** - Have a white line painted around the edge of any outside steps.

3. **Tidy up** - Make sure foliage in the garden isn't blocking light coming into the house. Remove any rubbish, or other unwanted debris lying around. Make sure anything toxic or poisonous is locked away. Be wary of anything sharp (including lawn mowers).

4. **Aid regular chores** - Clear a route to the bins, so that people can still put their rubbish out. Label the bins with pictures, so people know which one is recycling and which one is not.

5. **Security** - Look at securing the garden through putting locks on the gates, or removing keys, so that people can still spend time in the garden without being supervised if they are prone to wandering. Use your judgement as to whether it is more restrictive to the person through doing this, or ensures that they are safe but still able to choose what they would like to do.

6. **Make a memory garden** - Look at planting some sensory plants, or traditional ones that trigger happy memories and involve people in choosing the plants. Encourage people to grow vegetables, fruits and flowers from seeds, plant and water them if this interests them. Make sure what you plant is not poisonous or toxic — you'd be surprised at how many household name plants are.

Being outside is good for people, helping sow, plant and nurture plants keep skills and recognition alive, and picking and eating the produce is fun too. Avoid shady or dark areas, as these can be distressing for people, and try to level out uneven paths.

Put seating at regular intervals, preferably near a focal point such as a bird bath or feeding table. Don't worry about mess or mud, it can always be cleaned up.

7. **Trip hazards** - Consider levelling out any steps into the house, so that people are less likely to trip.