

## Alzheimer's Adjustments: Tips for Home Safety

Once a loved one is diagnosed with Alzheimer's, it is important to take a close look around their home to see what adjustments can be made to make it a safe living environment. Rooms must be reorganized to be as accident proof as possible for your loved one. Even once the Alzheimer's begins to progress, changes to the home must continually be made. Think about the possibility of a loved one tripping over a rug or not being able to see when it gets to be dark outside and adapt their home accordingly. Living at home with Alzheimer's is manageable and it can be beneficial staying in familiar surroundings, but realizing that every home will have different safety issues that will need to be tended to is one key to home caring success. Here are just a few safety tips, room by room to help get you thinking:

### General Safety

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- Working smoke detector on every floor, in bedrooms and hallways
- Carbon monoxide detector installed
- Fire extinguishers in kitchen and every floor
- Emergency fire exit plan written and practiced
- Emergency contact list by every phone (*link list from home caring site*)
- All major electrical appliances grounded
- All electrical cords properly installed, no cord frays
- Check for potential electrical fire hazards
- Use child proof plugs on all unused electrical outlets

### Living/Family Room

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- Area free of clutter
- Remove all rugs, coffee tables, floor lamps and extension cords to reduce falling
- Remove plants, dirt, leaves and rocks, they may be seen as a food product
- Add protective padding on furniture with sharp edges
- Able to reach light switch without walking into the dark
- Furniture sturdy for support, easy to get up and sit down in

### Kitchen

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- Automatic appliances that turn-off, if necessary remove burner and stove knobs
- Alarms that can be used as a reminder while cooking
- Sharp objects such as knives, scissors and forks stored away
- Turn off electricity to garbage disposal
- Store away cleaning solution by using child safety locks for cabinets
- Towels and curtains kept away from the stove
- Organize and label cabinets and drawers explaining in pictures or writing what items are in each of them
- Keep refrigerator and pantry clean of all expired food items

### Bathroom

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- Non-skid floor mats in shower
- Shower bench if person has trouble standing

- Use a shower curtain, rather than glass doors
- Install a walk in shower if possible
- Medicine cabinets locked up
- Hair appliances unplugged and stored away
- Handrails in shower and around the toilet (not towel racks)
- Make sure water knobs are clearly labeled hot and cold, try using a lever instead of a faucet
- Change water heater to 120 degrees to avoid burns
- Razors stored away and monitor while using

### Bedroom

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- Floors free of clutter, including rugs
- Night lights installed, but away from bedspread and curtains
- Remove space heater and use a ceiling fan, rather than a portable fan
- Keep a phone in reach of the bed
- Use intercom system, if caregiver sleeps in another room to hear activity of loved one

### Hallways, Stairs, Doors

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- Night lights used in dark areas
- Light switches at bottom and top of stairs
- Install child safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs, especially at night
- Floor free of clutter, loose carpeting and rugs
- Secure handrails
- No carpet tears and runners must be fastened down
- Deadbolt locks on doors that lead outside at the top or bottom, so they can't easily be seen
- Take off bedroom, bathroom and closet door locks
- Put pictures or colored tape on glass-sliding doors

### Laundry Room

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- If possible, keep doors locked
- Lock up laundry detergent and bleach
- Keep the appliance doors shut so no objects get placed in them
- Remove knobs on washer and dryer to prevent non clothing items ruining the appliances

### Garage and Basement

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- If possible, restrict access into these areas
- Lock up tools and other mechanical devices
- If mobility is restricted, take away keys and cover up bikes
- Hide lawn mower, weed trimmer, grills, snow blowers
- Lock up toxic materials, like paints and fertilizers
- Lock up or get rid of any guns

### Outside the house

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- Make sure that cement steps are in good shape and even
- In the winter, have salt ready to prevent ice and snow buildup
- Keep walkways clear of hoses, bushes, sprinklers, lawn chairs, etc
- If out during the evening hours, be sure to keep walkways and house entryways lit up
- Place a bench or small table near the door to put objects down while unlocking the door
- If needed, switch to a ramp or add handrails to steps
- Place a hidden spare key outside of the house in case you are locked out.