



Caring for Someone Living with Dementia - 04

CARING FOR SOMEONE WHO LIVES ALONE

This Help Sheet addresses concerns families and care partners may have when someone with dementia lives alone, and some ways to help the person live alone safely.

Each person with dementia is unique and so is the situation in which they find themselves. While most people live with a partner or in some type of family situation, increasingly many people live alone. This may be by choice, or by circumstance. Whatever the reason, it creates a challenge for people who care for someone with dementia who lives on their own.

A diagnosis of dementia does not automatically mean that people are immediately incapable of caring for themselves. Assisting a person to remain in the familiar surroundings of their home for as long as possible is a worthwhile goal. However, it can be very worrying for family and friends.

The type of support needed depends on the individual situation.

A person living alone may:

- Forget to eat or take prescribed medication.
- Forget to bathe or change their clothes regularly.
- Lack awareness of potentially hazardous situations such as fire or electrical appliances.
- Show poor judgement about who they let into the house.
- Forget to feed or care for pets.
- Have unrealistic ideas or suspicions which can lead to trouble with neighbors, the police or the community.

Some of these situations may be able to be dealt with fairly simply. For instance, if the person is forgetting to eat, arrange for delivered meals, such as meals-on-wheels and then make a phone call or have a person visit to remind them to eat the meal.

Some of the situations however may compromise the person's safety and well-being, and a move to more supervised care may have to be arranged.

How can you help?

Accepting a degree of risk

There is an increased risk when a person with dementia lives alone. However, whether this continues to be an acceptable risk will need to be reviewed regularly by family, care partners and professionals. The person's own wishes and concerns must also be considered.

Family involvement

It may be possible for more family members to be involved in aspects of the care and assistance of someone living alone. It can be useful to organize a family meeting at an early stage to work out what each person can offer now and into the future as well as when the situation will be reviewed.



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Household safety

Ensure that the house is well lit and that there are no obvious hazards such as faulty kitchen appliances, loose carpets or unsteady furniture.

Aids to independence

There are many aids which can assist a person to remain independent.

Some of these include:

- Hand rails at bath, shower and toilet.
- Easy to read clocks and large calendars will help to orient to time.
- Reminder timers may also be helpful, particularly for remembering medications.
- Personal alarms or monitoring systems may help.

Managing Finances

As the dementia progresses, the person's ability to make financial and legal decisions will decrease. They will need assistance in managing their finances. It is essential to get legal and financial advice while the person can still participate in the decision.

Telling other people

Explain the person's condition to friends, neighbors, local shopkeepers and the local police and provide them with contact numbers. They can be very helpful in keeping a tactful eye on a person with dementia. Ensure that the person has adequate identification and an emergency contact number when they go out.

FURTHER INFORMATION: locally call Dementia Friendly Wyoming 307-461-7134 or visit our website <http://www.dwfsheridan.org> or The Sheridan Senior Center 307-672-2240. Nationally contact the Alzheimer's Association at 1-800-272-3900, or visit their website at <http://www.alz.org>.