



Tips for Preventing Dementia

Description

The word 'dementia' describes a set of symptoms that may include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language. Dementia is caused by a number of diseases that affect the brain. The most common is Alzheimer's but diseases also include vascular dementia, dementia with Lewy bodies and Pick's disease.

Lesson Objectives

Specific program objectives are to:

1. Increase understanding of the prevalence and different types of dementia.
2. Recognize the risk factors for dementia.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the 10 tips for preventing dementia.
4. Identify ways to make their homes safer for people with dementia.

Intended Audiences

This lesson is intended for any adult regardless of age, race, ethnicity, income, profession or other demographic characteristics, but particularly for those concerned about developing dementia in the future or caring for someone with dementia.

Preparing for your Lesson

- Plan this program for 30 minutes to include program delivery, reviewing home safety handout, and questions and answers.
- Print enough copies of the handout on Home Safety from the Mayo Clinic for your audience.
- Thoroughly read the Presenting the Lesson section of this document to ensure you understand the content and have all the necessary supplies.
- Optional: supplies needed for fill in worksheet for participants to follow along
 - Pens or pencils for participants
 - Print enough copies of the handout *Participant Fill In Worksheet*

Presenting the Lesson

Prevalence

- Worldwide, around 50 million people have dementia.
- Every year, there are nearly 10 million new cases.
- The estimated proportion of the general population aged 60 and over with dementia at a given time is between 5-8%.
- The total number of people with dementia is projected to reach 82 million in 2030 and 152 million in 2050.

Risk Factors

- **Age:** 6 out of 100 people aged 75-79 will have dementia
- **Genes:**
 - Most instances of dementia are not inherited, but we can inherit genes from are parents that make us more vulnerable
 - No copies of ApoE4: 6 out of 100, 75-year-olds will have dementia
 - 1 copy of ApoE4: 11 out of 100, 75-year-olds will have dementia
 - 2 copies of ApoE4: 18 out of 100 75-year-olds will have dementia (getting 2 copies is very rare)
- **Life-style choices**
 - Non-smoker: 6 out of 100 non-smoking 75-year-olds will have dementia
 - Smoker: 9 out of 100 smoking 75-year-olds will have dementia
 - Ex-smoker: 6 out of 100 ex-smokers 75-year-olds will have dementia
- **Diabetes**
 - 6 out of 100 75-year-olds without diabetes will have dementia
 - 10 out of 100 75-year-olds with diabetes will have dementia
- **Exercise**
- **Diet**
- **Alcohol consumption**
- **Social life**
- **Sleep**

Tips for Preventing Dementia

1. **Break a sweat**
 - Of all the lifestyle changes that have been studied, taking regular physical exercise appears to be one of the best things that you can do to reduce your risk of getting dementia.
 - Combining the results of 11 studies shows that regular exercise can significantly reduce the risk of developing dementia by about 30%. For Alzheimer's disease, the risk was reduced by 45%.
 - In general, they are referring to aerobic exercise performed for a sustained period of time, around 20–30 minutes.
2. **Hit the books**
 - Formal education in any stage of life will help reduce your risk of cognitive decline and dementia.
3. **Butt out**
 - Smoking increases risk of cognitive decline.
4. **Follow your heart**
 - Risk factors for cardiovascular disease and stroke – obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes – negatively impact your cognitive health.
5. **Heads up**
 - Brain injury can raise your risk of cognitive decline and dementia

- Wear a seat belt, use a helmet when playing contact sports or riding a bike, and take steps to prevent falls.
6. **Fuel up right: Mediterranean-style diet**
 - There is some evidence that eating a Mediterranean-style diet can reduce the risk of developing problems with memory and thinking and getting some forms of dementia.
 - High: fruits, vegetables, legumes and cereals
 - Moderate: oily fish and dairy
 - Low in meat, sugar and saturated fat
 7. **Catch some Zzz's**
 - Not getting enough sleep due to conditions like insomnia or sleep apnea may result in problems with memory and thinking.
 8. **Take care of your mental health**
 - Some studies link a history of depression with increased cognitive decline.
 - Seek medical treatment if you have symptoms of depression, anxiety, or other mental concerns.
 9. **Buddy up**
 - Staying socially engaged may support brain health.
 - Pursue social activities that are meaningful to you.
 - Find ways to be a part of your local community.
 10. **Stump yourself: brain training**
 - Challenge and activate your mind
 - Includes but not limited to crosswords, Sudoku puzzles, jigsaw puzzle, building something, and playing games
 - So far, no studies have shown that brain training prevents dementia; however, this is a relatively new area of research.

Home Safety

*Refer to handout from Mayo Clinic

Dementia Friendly Communities

- England and Wales only according to website
- Focuses on improving inclusion and quality of life for people with dementia in a number of ways.

Resources

Websites

- Dementiafriendsindiana.org
- [Indiana Commission on Aging](#)
- [Dementia website](#)
- [Alzheimer's Association website](#)
- [Mayo Clinic](#)

Agency Resources

- Lifestream Services Inc.
- QSource Indiana
- CICOA Aging and In-Home Solutions
- SHIP (State Health Insurance Assistance Program) Counseling - free counseling for people with Medicare

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Healthy Lifestyle

Caregivers

Caring for a loved one who has Alzheimer's can be rewarding — and stressful. Follow these home safety tips to help keep your loved one out of harm's way.

By Mayo Clinic Staff

Home safety is important for everyone, but this is especially true if you're caring for a loved one who has Alzheimer's disease in your home. A throw rug or a stray toy on the steps could easily cause a fall or injury.

To prevent stressful and dangerous situations, consider these home safety tips for caregivers. Periodically, it might be helpful to request a physical therapy referral for a home safety evaluation.

Start by thinking about your loved one's behavior, abilities and health. Can your loved one safely use stairs? Does he or she wander or get up at night? Has he or she fallen before?

Then check each room for potential hazards and make a note of changes you'd like to make. Keep in mind that changing the environment will likely be more effective than trying to change your loved one's behavior. Changes in abilities need to be reevaluated periodically as the disease advances.

In the bathroom:

- **Install a shower chair and grab bars.** Place grab bars near the toilet, near the bathtub and in the shower. A hand-held shower head also might be useful.
- **Address slippery surfaces.** Place nonskid strips or a mat in the bathtub and shower. Unless the bathroom is carpeted, place nonskid strips on the floor near the bathtub, shower, toilet and sink, too.
- **Use a faucet cover in the bathtub.** A foam rubber faucet cover can help prevent serious injury if your loved one falls in the bathtub.
- **Lock up potentially hazardous products or electrical appliances.** Install childproof latches on cabinets and drawers to limit access to potentially dangerous items. Use child-restraint caps on medication containers.
- **Reduce water temperature.** Set the thermostat on your hot water heater to below 120 F (48.9 C).

- **Remove door locks.** Consider removing locks from the bathroom doors to prevent your loved one from accidentally locking himself or herself in.

In the kitchen:

- **Prevent access to potentially dangerous appliances.** Install safety knobs on the stove to prevent your loved one from turning the stove on or off. Disconnect the garbage disposal.
- **Remove artificial fruits or vegetables or food-shaped magnets.** These objects might appear to be edible.
- **Lock up breakable or potentially dangerous supplies.** Install childproof latches on cabinets and drawers to limit access to items such as cleaning products, alcohol, matches, knives, scissors and even plastic bags.

In the bedroom:

- **Install a monitoring device.** A baby monitor will help you hear if your loved one needs help. This might be particularly helpful if your loved one has advanced dementia.
- **Take caution when using heating devices.** Don't use portable space heaters in your loved one's bedroom. If your loved one uses an electric blanket or heating pad, keep the controls out of his or her reach.

If your loved one tends to get up at night to drink, eat or use the bathroom, try to meet these needs before he or she goes to bed.

In the main living areas:

- **Avoid clutter.** Recycle newspapers and magazines. Keep areas where people walk free of furniture and cords. Keep plastic bags out of reach. Limit decorative objects. Trim large plants, and remove plants that might be toxic if eaten.
- **Mark glass doors, windows and furniture.** Place a decal on glass at your loved one's eye level to help him or her see glass panes.
- **Take caution when using fireplaces.** Don't leave your loved one alone with an open fire in the fireplace.

In the laundry room:

- **Lock up potentially hazardous products.** Install childproof latches on cabinets where you keep detergent and other potentially hazardous supplies.
- **Prevent access to the washer and dryer.** Close and latch the doors and lids to the washer and dryer. Consider removing large knobs if your loved one tries to tamper with the machinery.

If the laundry room has a door, consider keeping it locked.

In the garage, shed and basement:

- **Lock up potentially dangerous items.** Install childproof latches or locks on cabinets where you keep tools, tackle, machines, sporting equipment, paint, fertilizer, gas, cleaning supplies or other toxic materials. Remove all guns or weapons from your home.

- **Lock all vehicles.** Consider covering or removing vehicles and bikes that aren't frequently used if your loved one has advanced dementia.

Consider locking the doors to these areas as well.

To ensure safety outdoors:

- **Check exits.** If your loved one uses a walker or wheelchair, make sure he or she will be able to get in and out of your home — when necessary. Consider widening doorways or adding ramps.
- **Keep steps safe.** Mark the edges of steps with bright tape. Keep steps sturdy and textured to prevent falls in wet or icy weather.
- **Restrict access to the pool.** If you have a swimming pool or hot tub, surround it with a fence. Install a gate with a lock. Cover the pool or hot tub when it's not in use.
- **Avoid clutter.** Keep hoses, foliage and other debris off the walkways.
- **Safely store fuel sources.** Remove fuel sources for your grill or other equipment when not in use.

In addition, consider taking these safety precautions throughout your home:

- **Prepare for emergencies.** Display emergency numbers and your home address near all telephones.
- **Use night lights.** Place night lights in your loved one's bedroom and the bathroom to help prevent your loved one from tripping if he or she gets up at night.
- **Treat slippery or uneven surfaces.** Remove throw rugs. Place nonskid strips or wax on hardwood and tile floors.
- **Adjust the home phone and voice mail settings.** Lower the ringer volume of your home phone to prevent distraction and confusion. Set the answering machine or voice mail to turn on after the lowest number of rings. A person who has Alzheimer's might be unable to take messages or could become the victim of telephone exploitation.
- **Keep stairs safe.** Install light switches at the top and bottom of stairs. Make sure stairs have at least one handrail that extends beyond the first and last steps.

Cover stairs in carpet or apply nonskid strips. If your loved one has balance problems, install safety gates in front of stairs.

- **Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.** Place them in or near the kitchen and all sleeping areas. Check them regularly to make sure they work. If your loved one has vision or hearing problems, install a smoke alarm with a vibrating pad or flashing light.
- **Check the locks.** Make sure there are working locks on all windows and front and back doors. Keep a spare set of house keys outside of the house, in case your loved one locks you out. Install deadbolts high or low on outside doors to make it harder to get out.
- **Address outlets and electrical cords.** Place lamps close to electrical outlets. Cover unused electrical outlets with childproof plugs.

- **Keep computer equipment out of the way.** If you store valuable documents on your computer, protect the files with passwords and create backup files. Consider monitoring your loved one's computer use.

You can buy many products or gadgets necessary for home safety in hardware, electronics, medical supply and children's stores. If you need help making changes to your home, enlist friends, a home safety professional or a community organization.

Remember, paying attention to home safety can help your loved one maintain his or her independence — and ease the stress of caregiving.

Show References

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Leader Guide

What is dementia?

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- Dementia is caused by a number of diseases that affect the brain. The most common is Alzheimer's but diseases also include vascular dementia, dementia with Lewy bodies and Pick's disease.

Prevalence

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- Every year, there are nearly 10 million new cases.
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