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Worksheet for Making the Home Safer for a Person with Memory Loss

We hope that you will find these suggestions helpful for making your home safer; however, we recognize that making a home absolutely safe is not possible. These suggestions do not substitute for close supervision of the person with memory loss, but are intended to ease the burden of constant vigilance.

(See Resource List for where to purchase underlined items.)

Special Considerations for Safety in the Home

- Has the person with memory problems stopped driving?**
 - A tragic accident can happen in your own driveway because of delayed reactions and periods of confusion.
 - On-line resource: <http://www.thehartford.com/alzheimers>

- Are the car keys well hidden?**
 - Seeing the keys can lead to a desire or attempt to drive even if the person with memory problems has stopped driving.

- Does the person with memory problems have access to power tools or power equipment such as lawn mowers and snow blowers?**
 - Remove or disable this equipment, or secure them in a locked basement or garage.

- Are there guns in the house?**
 - Remove all firearms or store them unloaded in a locked location.

Exits and Entrances to the House

- Put a **slide bolt lock** at the top and/or bottom of exit doors where it will be least noticeable.
- Lock sliding glass doors.**
 - A wooden dowel in the runner at the bottom works well if the care-recipient does not know how to remove it.
- Use a **motion sensor** in addition to the locks at the exits.
 - The motion sensor alarm is especially useful at night for warning you when the care-recipient wanders toward an exit door.
- Send for an identification (ID) bracelet for the care-recipient.**
 - The “Safe Returns” program of the Alzheimer’s Association provides an ID bracelet and a registry. If you need a registration form, then call 1-888-572-8566 or on-line
www.alz.org/caregiver/programs/safereturn.htm
- Give the name and a recent picture of the care-recipient to the local police.**
 - This is helpful for finding someone quickly if they get lost.
- Hide a *spare key* outside the house. Give a spare key to a trusted neighbor, family member, or friend.**
- Clear walkways and staircases throughout the house.**
 - Take small tables and pieces of furniture out of the walkways; otherwise, leave furniture in its usual place.
- Install railings on both sides of the stairs, if possible.**
- Highlight steps with contrasting tape.**
 - Put one or two strips across the entire edge of each step.

Kitchen Safety

- Remove the knobs from the stove.**
 - Hide knobs in a nearby drawer or use Stove Knob covers to hide the appearance of the knobs.

- Remove medicines from all counter tops.**
 - Hide medicines in a cabinet that is out of reach or use a Cabinet Slide Lock.

- Reset faucet water temperature to 110 to 120 degrees Fahrenheit.**
 - This temperature feels warm for bathing and cleaning, but will not cause a burn if no cold water is added.

- Remove scissors and knives from counters and drawers.**
 - Keep one large and one small knife hidden for your use.

- Disable the garbage disposal and instant hot water.**

- Remove cleaning supplies and all other toxic items from reach.**
 - Place them in a cabinet or closet that can be locked or which is used infrequently.
 - Throw away old toxic supplies.

- Unplug electrical appliances when you are not using them.**

- Unplug the microwave when it is not being used or have an electrician install a hidden switch.**
 - Liquids can get very hot.
 - Material, which is not microwavable, may be placed in the oven and can catch on fire (if microwaved).

Bathroom Safety

- Use **non-skid appliqués** or mats in the shower and tub.
- Install a **tub safety rail** and consider a **toilet safety rail**.
- Install **grab bars** at the front and side wall of the shower.
 - The screws **MUST** go into the wall studs.
 - If you need a carpenter to do this, then call your local Council on Aging for a list of available carpenters.
- Use a **shower bench** in the shower or tub for stability.
 - We recommend the **Universal Bath Bench with Back** brand because it is more stable than other brands.
- Remove glass shower doors and replace them with a shower curtain on a tension rod.**
 - Glass doors can pop out easily if they are used for support and this can cause injury.
 - If replacing glass doors with a shower curtain, then leave the doors' hardware in place so that the doors can be replaced at a later time.
- Remove medications and cleaning supplies from cabinets.**
 - Hide/lock these items in a drawer or cabinet that is not used often.
 - **Cabinet Slide Locks** are convenient to use and increase safety.
- Use a cordless rechargeable electric shaver.**
 - A cordless shaver is safer because it will not cause an electric shock if it is dropped into water.
- Remove and hide personal electrical equipment such as hair dryers and curling irons.**
- Replace doorknobs in bathroom and bedroom if they lock and cannot be unlocked easily from outside the room.**

Helpful Hints for General Home Safety

- Remove scatter rugs except for nonskid rugs in the bathroom.**
 - People of all ages tend to trip on scatter rugs.
 - If you must use scatter rugs, then use rugs with non-skid backing or apply two-way carpet tape.

- Use nightlights in the bathroom, hallway, and bedroom.**

- Increase the brightness of your current lamps and fixtures.**
 - Do not exceed the wattage recommended by the manufacturer.

- Replace extension cords with surge protectors.**
 - Keep electrical wires out of walkways.
 - Repair frayed wires.

- Install smoke detectors on each level of your home.**
 - Check their batteries for functioning every month.
 - Replace their batteries once a year (choose a date that will remind you to do this, such as your birthday).

- Have a working fire extinguisher.**
 - Place a fire extinguisher in the kitchen, but not over the stove.
 - Check the gauge (that shows whether or not the extinguisher is “charged”) once a year.

- Identify the bedrooms, to help the fire department find them during a fire, by placing a sticker on the windows.**
 - Ask your local fire department for further directions or stickers.
 - Plan and practice an escape route in the event of a fire, especially at night when most fatal fires occur.

- Place emergency phone numbers at every telephone.**

- Keep a telephone and flashlight at your bedside.**

Resource List for Home Safety Items

Hardware Stores

	<u>Average Price</u>
9 Volt Smoke Alarm	\$16.49
9 Volt Batteries	\$2.19
Surge Protector	\$6.99
2pk Auto Night Light	\$3.99
Flashlight	\$0.99
Safety First Cabinet Slide Lock	\$2.59
Surface Bolt 4"	\$6.29
Safety First Stove Knob Covers	\$7.99
2" Carpet Tape	\$4.39
Duct Tape: White and/or Yellow	\$3.30
Fire Extinguisher	\$9.99
Tub and Shower Safety Treads	\$4.97
Hand-held shower with diverter valve	\$23.73
Door knob with one-way lock	\$15.99
Medication dispenser	\$6.99

Radio Shack

Motion Sensor ("Mini PIR Alarm" Item No. 49-425) \$24.99

Has a chime sound and an alarm sound. Very easy to set up and quickly enhances safety for wandering.

AliMed "Help at Home" **(See Photos on Next Page)**

1-800-225-2610 (A mail-order company that will deliver to your home)

18" Toilet/Tub grab bars \$24.05 each

Tub Safety Rail \$49.96 each

Clamp-On Rail clamps to any tub with the twist of a dial. Solid handle will not budge against your weight. Fits tub wall widths from 3" to 7".

Adjustable Toilet Safety Rails \$45.00 each

Helps with occasional balance problems. Attaches easily to standard toilet without tools.

Sammons Preston

1-800-323-5547 (A mail-order company that will deliver to your home)

Universal Bath Bench with Back \$57.45