



Supporting people with dementia at home – some practical tips

Written by Vicky Loewer, an Admiral Nurse on Admiral Nursing Direct

My name is Vicky and I am an Admiral Nurse. Admiral Nurses are specialist dementia nurses. I currently work on Dementia UK's National Dementia Helpline, Admiral Nursing Direct. My job is to provide expert practical and emotional support for families living with dementia.

On the helpline we receive a variety of calls about many different issues that people with dementia and their families face every day. Many calls we receive are from people who are worried that the person with dementia is no longer safe to live on their own. For example, they may be leaving the gas on or flooding the bathroom. Often the person with dementia is living with their loved one but they are leaving the house in the middle of the night due to their disorientation. Sometimes they have incontinence issues as they are disorientated in their own home.

The majority of these issues occur because dementia can affect a person's ability to interpret their environment. In some cases, people may require a more supported living environment such as extra care housing or a residential home placement. However, where possible we support people with dementia to remain in their own homes.

In our experience, there are many simple adjustments that can be made to help manage the problems that arise. Below is a summary of tips that we suggest to people on our helpline. The full list of tips can be found [on our website](#).

- **NOISE:** Reduce noise such as TV and/or radio. People with dementia may find it difficult to concentrate on more than one thing at once so it is important not to over stimulate them.
- **LIGHT:** Light is exceptionally important for someone with dementia as it helps with orientation and well being. Increase natural light during the day by taking down unnecessary net curtains or blinds and create more light by using higher watt light bulbs.
- **SAFETY:** Fit fire alarms and heat detectors. You can install manual sensors in beds to alert you if a person has left the bed as well as plugs that automatically drain away water when sinks and baths are too full to prevent flooding.

- LABELLING: Labelling can be very helpful but try not to introduce new systems as this may increase confusion. Keep it simple, for example on the bathroom door put up pictures of a toilet, sink and bath.
- BATHROOM: A lot of people have issues finding the toilet at night and in their panic can be incontinent. Do leave the bathroom light on so it's easier to find. Have a toilet lid and seat that contrast with the colour of the pan for visual ease.
- LIVING AREA: Try using a whiteboard to have reminders for the person such as appointments or events. A large calendar and/or clock indicating the day/date alongside this will also help.

To read more about Admiral Nurses and ways that we can support you please visit our [website](#).

Admiral Nursing Direct dementia helpline is open 9am–5pm 7 days a week, and Wednesday and Thursday evenings 6pm-9pm. Call 0800 888 6678 or email direct@dementiauk.org.

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