

Safety Concerns for People with Dementia

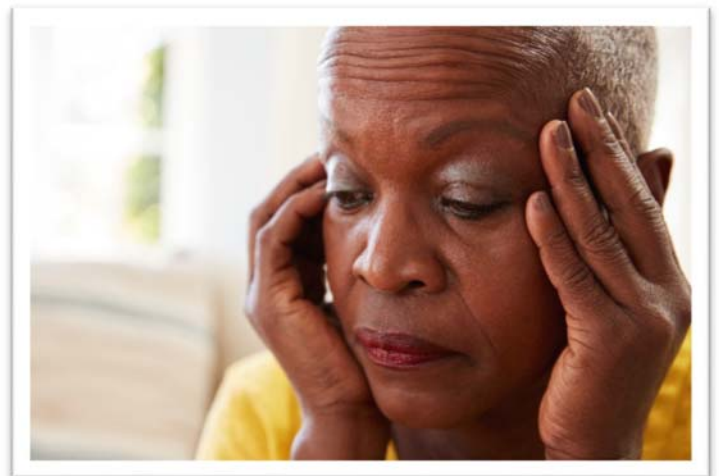
Not all memory loss is due to dementia. Memory loss and/or confusion may be a result of many conditions, some of which are reversible. If you or someone you know has memory loss or confusion that's getting worse, it's important to talk with a health care professional about it. If it does turn out to be dementia, there are steps you can take to live well, and plan for a future with it.

Dementia affects each person differently, but symptoms typically include increasing memory loss, confusion, and disorientation. Changes in the brain can also impact how individuals interpret what they see, hear, feel, taste or smell, and their sense of time, place and judgment – each of which can impact safety.

The best environment for a person with memory loss or dementia is one that helps them feel as independent and supported as possible. For people with dementia wanting to stay at home, it's key to find the right balance between independence and safety – and to anticipate changes. With creativity and flexibility, it's possible to make adaptations that make the home safer and less stressful for all.

This "Info Kit" is a resource for family members and caregivers to assist in evaluating the home and taking steps to promote safety over the course of dementia. Materials highlight information and tips related to the following:

1. Home Safety
2. Falls Prevention
3. Driving
4. Wandering
5. Emergency Preparedness
6. Elder Abuse & Financial Exploitation







You may click on the links provided below each resource to view or print the information yourself. When a computer icon appears, the information is intended to be viewed online, and not in a printable format.


**IT'S HELPFUL TO PLAN AHEAD: PUT SAFETY MEASURES IN PLACE BEFORE
THEY'RE REALLY NEEDED**

Visit <https://www.vda.virginia.gov/dementia.htm#dfs> for Fact Sheets on Dementia in English and Spanish including Home Safety, Getting Lost and Driving.

1. HOME SAFETY

-  **Alzheimer's Caregiving Tips, Home Safety** (National Institute on Aging, 2017)
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/publication/home-safety>
A webpage that covers the topic of home safety, offering tips on basic safety for every room, moving around the house and minimizing danger. Includes information about impairment for each sense - sight, smell, touch, hear, and taste - and how this may affect safety in the home.
-  **Home Safety for People with Alzheimer's Disease** (National Institute on Aging, 2017)
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/home-safety-checklist-alzheimers-disease>
A webpage for those who provide in-home care for people with cognitive impairment, Alzheimer's, or other dementias. It includes checklists for each room in the home to create a safer environment.
-  **Alzheimer's and Home Safety - Webpage** (Alzheimer's Association)
<https://www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-safety.asp>
This webpage contains information on how dementia affects safety, and provides home safety tips. A home safety checklist for the rooms in a house can be downloaded here:
<https://www.alz.org/media/Documents/alzheimers-dementia-home-safety-checklist-ts.pdf>
-  **This Caring Home, Home Safety Virtual Home - Webpage** (This Caring Home)
<https://www.thiscaringhome.org/> Follow this link and select "Home Safety" to see options.
This webpage shows online research-based solutions to home safety and daily care issues. It offers information, visual diagrams and examples of products to promote safety in the bathroom, bedroom, kitchen, living/dining rooms, stairs and outdoors.

2. FALLS PREVENTION

- **Reducing Risk of Falls for People with Dementia** (Alzheimer Society of Manitoba, 2014)
<https://alzheimer.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2014-Dementia-Fall-Risk-Checklist-template.pdf>
This website shares the many reasons why people with dementia are at increased risk for falls. It also offers suggestions to increase safety in the physical environment.
-  **Falls and Older Adults – Webpage** (National Institute on Aging, 2017)
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/prevent-falls-and-fractures>
This webpage offers information about the increased risk of falls with aging and tips for making personal changes, fall proofing your home and maintaining bone health. While not dementia-specific, it offers useful information and considerations for all older adults.

Find a **Falls Prevention program** in your area by calling your local Area Agency on Aging:
Find yours at <https://www.vda.virginia.gov/aaamap.htm> or by calling 1-800-552-3402

3. DRIVING

- **Driving Information and Contract** (Alzheimer’s Association, 2019)
<https://www.alz.org/media/documents/alzheimers-dementia-driving-info-contract-ts.pdf>
Brief fact sheet that covers the need to plan for driving retirement, tips to help the person with dementia to cope with this change and for families of those who are reluctant/refusing to give up driving. It offers a “contract” which could be completed early in the disease process to encourage discussion and planning for driving decisions as the disease progresses.
- **At the Crossroads: Family Conversations about Alzheimer's, Dementia and Driving** (The Hartford Center for Mature Market Excellence, 2013)
https://s0.hfdstatic.com/sites/the_hartford/files/at-the-crossroads-2012.pdf
This 28-page guide helps families determine when it is time for loved ones with dementia to stop driving, and helps them cope with stopping driving.

- 🖥️ **Dementia and Driving Resource Center - Webpage** (Alzheimer’s Association)
<http://www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-and-driving.asp>
This webpage contains information on dementia, its impacts on driving, and signs of unsafe driving. It also offers tips and video examples on “having the conversation” with a loved one.



- **Safe Driving for a Life Time: Your Road Ahead - A Guide to Comprehensive Driving Evaluations** (The Hartford Center for Mature Market Excellence, 2016)
https://www.thehartford.com/sites/the_hartford/files/your-road-ahead-2012.pdf
This 30-page guide offers general information for those seeking information about comprehensive driving evaluations.

This website lists professionals that perform this type of evaluation in all areas of Virginia.

- <https://www.granddriver.net/testing-centers/>

- 🖥️ **Virginia GrandDriver** (Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services)
<https://granddriver.net>
Virginia GrandDriver is an educational resource designed to provide Virginians with information and resources about staying safe and mobile on the road as you age.

4. WANDERING

-  **Alzheimer's and Dementia Caregiver Center, Wandering and Alzheimer's Disease - Webpage** (National Institute on Aging, 2017)

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/wandering-and-alzheimers-disease>

This webpage offers information on dementia, ways to assist with daily life and get support, behaviors and more. It includes a section on safety concerns, including wandering.

-  **MedicAlert + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return** (Alzheimer's Association)

<https://www.alz.org/care/dementia-medic-alert-safe-return.asp>

This webpage describes the 24-hour nationwide emergency response service for individuals with dementia who may wander. It shares information about how the program works and how to purchase the medic-alert identification jewelry.

5. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS (Be ready for fires, floods, and/or earthquakes!)

-  **Alzheimer's Caregiving, Disaster Preparedness for Alzheimer's Caregivers** (National Institute on Aging, 2017)

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/disaster-preparedness-alzheimers-caregivers>

This webpage covers the topic of preparing for disasters such as severe weather, fires, floods, earthquakes and other emergency situations. It shares information on gathering supplies, what to do if you must leave home and if you are separated from your loved one.

- **The Calm Before the Storm: Family Conversations about Disaster Planning, Caregiving, Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia** (The Hartford Center for Mature Market Excellence, 2015) https://s0.hfdstatic.com/sites/the_hartford/files/cmme-storm.pdf
This 44-page guide helps caregivers prepare for natural disasters by planning with family, friends, and others. It includes worksheets, checklists and other helpful resources.

6. ELDER ABUSE AND FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION

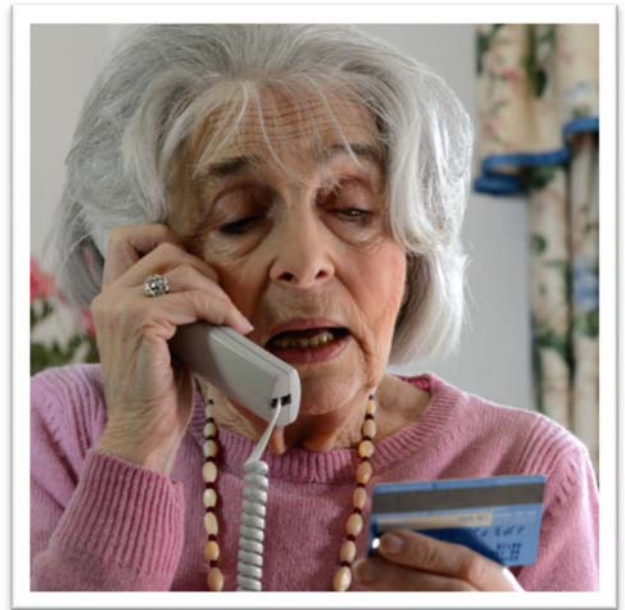
If You Suspect Abuse or Neglect:

Call 911 if you suspect there is **immediate danger** to the individual.

If no immediate danger exists, you still need to report the abuse or neglect. Call the **Adult Protective Services (APS) 24-hour Hotline** on **1-888-832-3858**

- **Red Flags of Abuse** (National Center on Elder Abuse)
[https://ncea.acl.gov/NCEA/media/publications/How-at-Risk-for-Abuse-Are-People-with-Dementia-\(2011\).pdf](https://ncea.acl.gov/NCEA/media/publications/How-at-Risk-for-Abuse-Are-People-with-Dementia-(2011).pdf)
People with dementia are at greater risk of abuse and neglect than those of the general older population. This 2-page fact sheet shares warning signs of neglect, financial abuse/exploitation, psychological/emotional abuse and physical/sexual abuse.

- **Answers on Aging™ Financial Exploitation: Safeguarding Your Money & Property** (National Association of Area Agencies on Aging)
<http://www.n4a.org/Files/financial-fraud-access508.pdf>
This 7-page brochure describes “warning signs” of financial exploitation, who may be at risk, and steps you can take to help avoid financial exploitation.



- **Abuse and Fraud** (Department for the Aging and Rehabilitative Services)
<https://www.vda.virginia.gov/abuseandfraud.htm>
This webpage offers information on scams and fraud, identity theft, financial exploitation, and abuse and neglect.

- **Scams** (Office of the Attorney General)
<https://www.oag.state.va.us/consumer-protection/index.php/scams-information>
This webpage offers red flags and tips to avoid becoming the victim of a scam.

Report scams to the Office of the Attorney General Consumer Protection Section by phone 1-800-552-9963 or email consumer@oag.state.va.us

MORE CARE AND SAFETY INFORMATION FOR CAREGIVERS

- **Caring for a Person with Alzheimer's Disease: Your Easy-to-Use Guide from the National Institute on Aging** (National Institute on Aging, 2019)
<https://order.nia.nih.gov/publication/caring-for-a-person-with-alzheimers-disease-your-easy-to-use-guide>
This 100-page guide offers dementia care information and advice. It discusses daily care, sundowning and other behaviors, and where to find help.
- **Virginia Caregiver Guide** (Virginia Caregiver Coalition/DARS, 2021)
<https://sharepoint.wvrc.net/VDApublic/Shared%20Documents/Caregiver%20Resource%20Guide.pdf>

A guide for family and other unpaid caregivers who care for an adult or senior with disabilities. The Guide provides a comprehensive overview of services and supports available to Virginians.

WANT TO TALK WITH A PERSON WHO CAN HELP WITH ISSUES OF DEMENTIA & SAFETY?

The **Alzheimer's Association** is the world's leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support, and research. The Association's four chapters in Virginia (National Capital Area, Greater Richmond, Central and Western Virginia, and Southeastern Virginia) provide specific services such as:

- Support groups & early stage programs
- Care consultation & education
- Web-based resources (www.alz.org)
- 24/7 Helpline, call 1-800-272-3900

Find **local services and supports** including support groups, respite care and counseling by calling your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA). Find your local AAA at <https://www.vda.virginia.gov/aaamap.htm> or by calling 1-800-552-3402

General information on disasters and preparedness can be found at the **Virginia Department of Emergency Management**

<https://vaemergency.gov>

Prepared by the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, Dementia Services

<https://vda.virginia.gov/dementia/>

804 662 9154 or email dementia@dars.virginia.gov

Adapted with permission from the Washington State [Dementia Action Collaborative \(DAC\)](#).