

ABOUT YOU... LIVING ALONE

If you have been diagnosed with dementia, and you live alone, this Help Sheet may be useful.

Increasingly people are living alone, whether by choice or circumstance. Many people will be living on their own when they are diagnosed with dementia. They will continue to live successfully on their own for some time by developing and using strategies, routines and support that best suit their individual needs.

“If I did not have the help I receive, I would not be able to live at home and have my independence” Marie who lives with dementia

This help sheet provides information about the support that is available to you, including the key points of contact and examples of strategies people use to live well independently.

Types of support

People value their independence, therefore asking for help and accepting it can sometimes be very difficult. Where possible, let family and friends know what aspects of living are hard for you and how they can support you.

Government support can also help you to continue to live alone at home. The types of services vary across different regions in Australia, but you do have choice over the types of support you can access. Packages or plans should offer flexibility to cater for individual needs and personal circumstances. This includes people living in cities or in rural and remote regions, people who are from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people with diverse cultural backgrounds or who speak languages other than English and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex.

The types of funded support includes personal care, companionship, household tasks, maintenance and home modification, transport, social and community activities, medical, allied health and respite care.

Strategies people use when living alone

You probably already use various strategies to support yourself, but you may also find the following ideas and strategies to be of assistance.

Alzheimer’s Australia has a large range of help sheets and other information resources on many topics that may help further. Visit fightdementia.org.au//about-dementia/resources/help-sheets

If you prefer to speak to someone directly, you can call the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**.

Maintain your wellbeing

Continue to do what you can, and seek support in any areas where you may need assistance to live a life that is personally meaningful.

Continue to take care of yourself. Eat a healthy diet that includes lots of fresh vegetables and fruit, and keep hydrated. Keep yourself mobile and active, sleep well and treat any pain and medical problems you may have.

Stay connected with friends, family and community. Use voluntary and funded services for support to do what you enjoy and also learn new things. For example, activities like sports, dancing, yoga, art, music, writing, crafts, technology, educational, spiritual, social and environmental interests.

Create a comfortable, safe, functional home

A comfortable, safe, and well-functioning home is essential for your independence. People have found the following strategies helpful if they have problems with memory, distance perception, organisation and sorting out the steps in tasks.

It is helpful to declutter cupboards, arrange furniture to enable clear pathways around the house, seal carpet edges, and contrast the colour of everyday objects with surrounding surfaces. The use of night lights, sensors and timed automatic appliances can also assist with safety around the house. Use item finding devices to help locate any lost items such as keys, wallets/purses or glasses, or give a set of keys to a trusted person.

It also helps to use visual cues and prompts such as sticking instructions beside appliances, and keeping a list of emergency contacts next to the phone. When shopping, try to avoid areas that are busy and noisy, and take a shopping list with you. Before visiting the doctor, write down any questions you have and take it with you. Ask your doctor for written instructions and reminders for when you are due for your next appointment. The use of supportive aids such as desk planners and dementia aid clocks can also assist with keeping track of dates and times.

For more detailed information, see Alzheimer's Australia's help sheets on dementia-friendly environments, visit fightdementia.org.au/about-dementia/resources/help-sheets

Safeguard yourself from potential abuse

People who live alone can potentially be more at risk of financial, emotional and physical abuse. It is important to talk to someone you trust if you feel that your wellbeing may be compromised in any way. For further information visit myagedcare.gov.au/legal-information/elder-abuse-concerns

Plan for your future

It can be hard to think about the future, but early planning can safeguard your choices. Put in place legal tools such as enduring guardianship, enduring power of attorney, Wills and advance care plans. If circumstances change, or if you change your mind later, you can always adjust your plans accordingly. For further information visit fightdementia.org.au/planning-ahead

Key contacts

To find out what support is available in your area there are a number of contact points:

- **Alzheimer's Australia** is the peak body that will provide you with information and support, and can assist you to access services based on your individual needs. **Alzheimer's Australia Younger Onset Dementia Key Workers** can help you to access the NDIS and provide age appropriate support. Call the National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500 or visit fightdementia.org.au
- **My Aged Care** is the pivotal place to access Government funded aged care service plans. Call 1800 200 422 or visit myagedcare.gov.au
- The **National Disability Insurance Scheme** (NDIS) provides Government funded plans for people under 65 with younger onset dementia. Call 1800 800 110 or visit ndis.gov.au
- The **Independent Living Centre** in each State and Territory provides information and advice about the latest technology, automated systems and products that can help you live at home longer. Call 1300 885 886 or visit ilcaustralia.org.au

FURTHER INFORMATION

Alzheimer's Australia offers support, information, education and counselling. Contact the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**, or visit our website at fightdementia.org.au



Interpreter

For language assistance phone the Translating and Interpreting Service on **131 450**