The aim of any modifications to the bedroom is to help the person with dementia to get into their own bed and encourage them to sleep or rest there for as long as possible at night. It should also:

• Help prevent falls from bed
• Make it easier to find the toilet at night
• Enable a person who wanders at night to do so safely
• Maximise the family and carer’s sleep

**Checklist**

Some common barriers to independence or safety in the bedroom are:

• Is illness or pain, cold, or discomfort leading to sleep disturbance?
• Are medications causing sleep disturbance?
• Can the person fall out of bed?
• Can the person locate the toilet at night?
• Is the bedroom warm enough?
• Is it safe to use an electric blanket?
• Are there slippery floors, mats or loose floor coverings?
• Are there any furniture obstacles in the bedroom?
• Does the person wander during the night?
What to try

Bed
Bed rails may help some people with dementia to settle and stay in their bed during the night. For others, however, the rails will cause frustration and the person may fall trying to climb over them.

Turn back the top sheet and use two different contrasting coloured sheets to assist the person to find the way into bed.

Raising the height of the bed and using a firm mattress may assist the person to get on and off the bed more easily.

Put a soft mattress or pillows on the floor beside the bed to soften a fall from bed.

Beds with adjustable height can be very helpful for transfers in and out of bed. Hospital beds, with adjustable height and the facility to raise the head or foot of the bed, can be purchased or rented. Use lifting and transfer equipment, if necessary.

Floor and furniture
Remove anything that could cause the person to trip and fall - loose mats and protruding edges of floor coverings.

If necessary, slightly rearrange furniture to enable a clear walking path to and from the bed. Chairs should be stable. Cover or pad sharp edges of furniture.

Heating
Electric blankets can be dangerous if the person is incontinent.

Low level heating such as an oil filled heater, can be left on all night or programmed to come on at a particular time, providing safe background heating.

Remove hot water bottles if they are likely to be a risk. Consider wheat-filled heat packs which can be heated in the microwave oven and cannot be opened and spilled - however they must not be overheated.

Lighting
Depending on the individual, there are a number of different approaches to lighting during the night:

- No lights on to remind the person with dementia that it is night time and to discourage them from getting out of bed
- Soft night lights so that they will not be disoriented if they wake and get up during the night
- Lights to guide them to the toilet during the night - perhaps a light in the toilet and the toilet door open, as well as lights in the hall leading to the toilet
- Ordinary lights on in the main rooms and outside in the yard for safer wandering. Sensor lights in the house and yard are good for some people who wander at night, but others find them disturbing

Smoking
Install a smoke alarm near the bedroom and use ashtrays with a little water in them.

Further Information
Alzheimer’s Australia offers support, information, education and counselling. Contact the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500.

For further information and to view other Help Sheets visit our website at www.alzheimers.org.au