

About you: Living alone

This help sheet describes how dementia may impact someone's ability to live on their own, safely and independently. It suggests ways to maintain wellbeing and independence, and where to get support.

If you have been diagnosed with dementia and live alone, you may be able to continue to live independently for some time.

To do this, you can develop and use strategies and routines to adapt to changes in memory, thinking and abilities. You can also arrange for support that suits your own needs.

Dementia is challenging because it can cause changes to:

- memory
- thinking skills
- your ability to maintain daily tasks and routines, such as forgetting to eat, take medication, bathe, change your clothes or care for a pet
- your behaviour or emotions, which may be out of character
- your perception of your home environment
- your awareness around potentially hazardous situations such as fire, or not using appliances properly
- your judgement about who comes into your home.

Some situations may be able to be addressed by organising services, such as getting meals delivered, or having someone help you to develop a schedule to remind you to do daily tasks. Other situations may compromise your safety and wellbeing, leading you to consider your ability to live alone.

Maintain your wellbeing

To maintain your wellbeing:

- Eat a healthy diet including lots of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Keep hydrated.
- Keep yourself mobile and active.

- Make regular appointments with your doctors, to monitor your health and talk about any medical concerns you may have.
- Stay connected with friends, family and community.
- Seek support in areas where you may need assistance, or to help you continue doing what you enjoy.
- Learn new things. You might take up sports, dancing, yoga, art, music, writing, crafts and study or consider engaging with spiritual, social or environmental interests.

Create a comfortable, safe, functional home

A comfortable, safe, and well-functioning home is essential for your independence and safety. A dementia-friendly home environment supports you to:

- live well at home
- maintain your independence
- carry out daily tasks
- feel safe and secure in a familiar place
- participate in enjoyable activities.

You can make changes in your home with the right advice, supports and practical modifications. You could write notes yourself, or ask a family member or friend for advice and help.

Elements to consider include:

- lighting
- safety
- general decor
- individual rooms
- outdoor areas
- obvious hazards, such as faulty kitchen appliances, loose carpets or unsteady furniture.

Aids for independence

Many aids can help you remain independent, such as:

- handrails at steps, the bath, shower and toilet
- easy-to-read clocks
- large calendars
- reminder timers, particularly for medications and turning off appliances
- emergency call systems.

The National Equipment Database (NED) provides information about the latest assistive technology, aids and products that can help you live at home longer.

Call: **1300 885 886**

Visit: askned.com.au

Plan for your future

As your dementia progresses, your ability to make financial and legal decisions will decrease.

It can be hard to think about the future, but early planning can safeguard your choices. It is essential to get both legal and financial advice while you can still participate in decisions.

Put in place arrangements such as:

- nominating a trusted family member or friend to be your enduring decision-maker for legal, financial and medical matters
- preparing your will
- talking with your family or trusted friend about your wishes in preparing your advance care plan.

If your circumstances alter or you change your mind later, you can adjust your plans accordingly.

Government support

Sometimes it can feel hard to ask for help or to accept it, particularly if you are used to being independent.

Government services and funded support can help you continue to live alone at home.

Types of support may include:

- help at home
- personal care
- companionship
- household tasks
- home maintenance and modification
- transport
- social and community activities
- clinical care
- allied health care
- respite care.

Packages or plans should offer flexibility for individual needs and personal circumstances. Service types vary across Australia.

To find out what support is available to you, contact:

- Dementia Australia
Call: **1800 100 500**
- My Aged Care
Call: **1800 200 422**
Visit: myagedcare.gov.au
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
Call: **1800 800 110**
Visit: ndis.gov.au

Family and friends can help

It may be possible for family members and friends to assist you in aspects of your care.

It can be useful to organise a meeting to work out:

- what type of assistance you may need
- what assistance each person can offer now, and into the future.

Talk with a trusted family member or friend about adapting to changes in abilities and identifying potential risks to your wellbeing and safety.

There may be increased risks living alone and you should talk about your situation regularly with family and friends, who will want to consider your own wishes and concerns.

Personal safety

When you go out, ensure you are carrying identification and an emergency contact number.

Consider talking about your diagnosis with people in your community, such as friends, neighbours, local shopkeepers and local police and provide them with contact numbers. They can help look out for you.

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 your wellbeing may be compromised in any way.

Who can help:

- **National Dementia Helpline**

Free telephone service that provides support, information, education and counselling.

Call: **1800 100 500**

- **Older Persons Advocacy Network**

Free, confidential and independent support to help you understand and exercise your rights, access aged care and solve aged care problems.

Call: **1800 700 600**

Visit: opan.org.au

- **1800RESPECT**

National domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service.

Call: **1800 737 732**

Visit: 1800respect.org.au

- **Elder Abuse Helpline**

Free information and support services for people who experience or witness the abuse of an older person.

Call: **1800 353 374**

Additional reading and resources

- Dementia Australia has developed a suite of help sheets about living well with dementia, and dementia-friendly environments

Visit: dementia.org.au/help-sheets

- Dementia Australia's At Home with Dementia program is a free service that helps you make your home more dementia-friendly

Visit: dementia.org.au/support/additional-programs/at-home-with-dementia

- Dementia Australia library service

Visit: dementia.org.au/library

- Dementia Australia support

Visit: dementia.org.au/support

Further information

Dementia Australia offers support, information, education and counselling.

National Dementia Helpline: 1800 100 500

For language assistance: 131 450

Visit our website: dementia.org.au