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Preparing Your Home for an Alzheimer's Patient

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Alzheimer's disease affects about 5.8 million Americans, a good percentage of whom are [65 and older](#). It could be your grandparent, parent, or even spouse who faces the diagnosis. Eventually, those with Alzheimer's require round-the-clock care. For many families, that means taking the loved one into their own home.

There are many ways you can prepare your home if you're taking in a loved one with Alzheimer's. Not only are the following necessary in keeping your loved one safe and comfortable, but many of these are [value-adding](#) measures that could pay off down the line should you choose to sell your home in the future.

Fail Proofing

Most of the time, [home improvements](#) will need to be made in order to ensure your loved one is

safe. According to Dementia and Alzheimer's Care, "They may no longer be able to understand or appreciate the dangers that linger in every home or may become easily confused, which can lead to injury." Therefore, you'll need to evaluate your home by doing a walkthrough in search of things like firearms, medications, cleaning products, and sharp objects that may be dangerous. Lock up and store these items in a private location. While all of this can seem overwhelming, in the end, it is worth it.

Go through your house room by room and create a list of [potential dangers](#) or triggers and prioritize that list. Make sure you cover outlets, soften sharp edges, keep dangling cords out of the way, and secure any heavy items to the wall. To avoid a serious accident, test your carbon monoxide and smoke detectors so that they are in working order. Add labels, pictures, and instructions to drawers and cabinets indicating what's inside so your loved one can find things and know how to use them. Also check that items are placed in accessible spots, making it easy for your loved one to reach, lift, and open them.

Decor

Your loved one may experience feelings of anxiety, fear, or panic due to the change of environment. Create a [soothing atmosphere](#) by avoiding busy patterns that may cause agitation. Keep familiar objects present that elicit positive emotions and memories, such as blankets and photographs. Simplify your home by moving furniture or clutter that may block the walking path of loved ones. Consider using motion-sensor lighting at night so they can find their way without having to locate the switch and risk falling.

Kitchen and Bath

Try to have a variety of colors in the [house](#), particularly in the bathroom or kitchen, as it can be hard to see and tell the difference between objects when they are all white or grey. Regularly clean your fridge out so that loved ones don't consume food that has expired. Make sure you have electronic devices that automatically shut off, such as a coffee pot, stove, oven, or hot iron. Avoid gas appliances and think about getting meals delivered so your loved one doesn't have to use the kitchen extensively. Set your water heater to a safe max temperature so they don't accidentally scald themselves, and ensure there is enough traction in the bathroom and [kitchen](#) to prevent slips. Install raised toilets with grab bars and a walk-in shower with a seat as they are easier to use.

Exits

Remove the locks to the bedroom and bathroom so loved ones don't accidentally lock themselves in, and gate off stairs to avoid falls. Keep the garage, shed, and attic off-limits by

locking them because they often contain the most hazardous materials. Use an alarm system that requires a code or chimes when exterior doors are opened. You can even sync these alarms to your phone so you are aware if your loved one leaves when you are not at home.

Be patient and know that each solution may be temporary as the disease continues to evolve and present new and more difficult challenges. Every home is unique, and every person has their own triggers. Consider hiring someone to check in regularly while you're at work, and inform your neighbors to contact you if they see your loved one wandering or hear an alarm.