

# Dealing With Memory Loss or Confusion

Declining or impaired memory can affect many aspects of an individual's daily routine.

People with impaired memory can experience feelings of stress, anxiety, frustration, and embarrassment. There may be a considerable impact on the family and carers of people with memory difficulties. This fact sheet provides information on equipment and strategies that may be used to compensate for memory loss, facilitate independence, reduce stress, increase safety, and promote well being.



## GENERAL SAFETY IN THE HOME

If you are concerned about a person falling when at home alone, a Fall Detector may provide some peace of mind. These devices are part of an emergency call system. They are worn on the belt and are sensitive to position. The device will detect if the user falls and sets off the alarm.

Leave doors open where possible so the person can find their bedroom and the bathroom. Keep hazardous materials locked-up, and make sure the person cannot lock themselves in a room.



Some toilet lock systems can be opened with a screwdriver in case of emergencies. Alternatively consider lift-off door hinges. A sign on the door can also help the person with memory difficulties to easily find the toilet.

Keep walkways clear, and rooms uncluttered to avoid distractions. Ensure good lighting especially at night to avoid disorientation and to decrease the risk of falling.

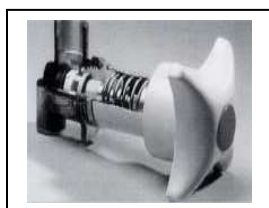
## WANDERING

If safety is a significant concern, installing a wanderer's alarm or occupancy monitor may give some peace of mind.

- Wanderer's alarms alert staff of family when a person wearing a transmitter is outside a designated area or range.
- Occupancy alarms indicate when a person is getting out of their chair or bed and activates an alarm.

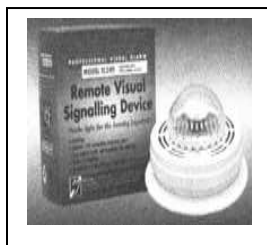


Some strategies for wandering people include: ensuring the person carries some form of identification with their name and address or contact number, relocating door locks, keeping keys out of sight, and providing a secured area for the person to wander around.



## WATER

To prevent scalding from hot water it may be necessary to install hot water shut-down, tempering valves, or a thermostat. Safety taps or tap covers will also reduce the risk of accidents by preventing the taps from being turned on.



### KITCHEN

A common safety concern is the stove being left on. A possible solution is stove cut-off device which turns the gas or power off after a specified time.

Smoke alarms should always be installed and regularly tested. Smoke alarms can be supplied with visual, auditory or vibrating indicators.

Some useful whitegoods may be an electric kettle that switches itself off once it has boiled and a refrigerator which beeps when the door is left open. There is a wide range of safety locks for the oven, cabinets, and stove knobs.

A microwave with clearly written instructions or dial operation, may be a safer and easier option than a stove. Labelling cabinets will assist the person to find what they want.



### MEDICATION REMINDERS

There are a number of medication organisers and pill reminders:

- Medication organisers have compartments for periodic doses of medication. These help remind an individual if they have taken their medication.

- Electric pill reminders have an alarm that reminds individuals to take their tablets.

Remember to always dispose of any unwanted or out-of-date medications, and store medications in a locked cabinet when not in use.



### COMMUNICATION

Give instructions using short and simple sentences, and show the person what to do as you instruct them. Allow them plenty of time to respond and eliminate distractions such as background noise.

Keep important numbers, such as family and emergency, near the telephone. Make sure these numbers are clearly written. Important numbers may also be programmed into some phones so that the user does not need to remember or look up the number. Remember that a telephone with larger buttons and less features may be easier to use.



Telstra EasyCall Delayed Hotline Feature allows the person to dial a specific number simply by lifting the receiver.

### ORIENTATION

Ensuring a person with memory difficulties is orientated to the time and place, and with a familiar person, can help to reduce their anxiety and frustration. Clocks with large numbers and large print calendars will assist with time and date orientation. Analogue clocks that feature automatic calendars indicating day, date, and month can be useful. Talking clocks, watches and key chains may be useful for a person who has difficulty telling the time.



### NEED TO KNOW MORE?

Telephone, fax or e-mail your enquiry to obtain further information from one of the therapists about products. Alternatively, you can make an appointment to trial the equipment at our display centres or through our outreach service. Please phone LifeTec Queensland for further details.

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