

Can a Person with Memory Loss Stay Alone?

Living day to day with Alzheimer's disease or another type of dementia requires a delicate balance between a person's independence and his/her safety. This balance is difficult to maintain when the person lives alone, and you, the caregiver, have to monitor the safety of this living arrangement.

Before making any changes, first evaluate how well the individual handles daily tasks. It is important to directly observe the person performing these routine activities. Do not rely on his/her report, because it may not truly reflect the problem at hand.

Use the following questions to help determine how well the person with dementia is functioning on his/her own and to identify safety concerns.

Nutritional Care

One or more "Yes" answers in this category may indicate a need for a change.

- | YES | NO | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is your loved one unable or unwilling to prepare meals? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there a demonstrated nutritional problem such as weight loss, illness or anemia? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does your loved one eat only inappropriate foods that will not supply nutritional needs? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does your loved one forget to eat? |

Personal Care

One or more "No" answers in this category may indicate a need for a change.

Does your loved one:

- | YES | NO | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Dress appropriately for the weather? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bathe or use the toilet independently when needed? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Change clothing or bed linens as necessary to remain clean and dry? |

Health & Safety

One or more "Yes" answers in this category may indicate a need for more supervision, support, or a change in living arrangements.

Does your loved one:

- | YES | NO | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have driving accidents, even minor ones? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Get lost driving or walking? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Burn pots on the stove or forget to turn off the burners or oven? |

- Forget to extinguish cigarettes?
- Let strangers into the house or lock him/herself out often?
- Know there are firearms or dangerous tools in the house?
And how to use them?
- Forget what to do in the case of an emergency?
- Risk injury from falls?
- Are there stairs or conditions in the home that are a hazard?
- Would your home require modifications to provide an adequate environment for your loved one such as heating, plumbing or an accessible bathroom?
- Refuse to use adequate safety devices such as a walker?
- Require nursing services that are too difficult for you physically such as turning or lifting?
- Demonstrate suspicious or paranoid behaviors?
- Lost interest in living or expressed a desire to die?

Home & Family Considerations

One or more "Yes" answers in this category may indicate a need for a change.

YES NO

- Does your loved one interfere with the running of the household?
- Do you have responsibilities for care of other family members that result in split loyalties or emotional overload?
- Has the lost privacy become a problem for the adult members of the household?
- Is there excessive conflict with younger adults and teenagers because of this family member?
- Does your loved one need someone to care for him or her at all times?

Other Tasks

One or more "No" answers in this category may indicate a need for a change.

Does your loved one:

YES NO

- Keep up with housekeeping or home repairs?
- Pay bills on time, balance checkbook and use credit cards?
- Shop, store and cook food correctly?
- Use the phone, handle answering machine or remember important phone numbers?
- Take medication on time and in the right amount?

Even if your loved one does not currently show problems in the above areas, remember to reevaluate on a frequent and regular basis. Any sudden changes in ability could indicate a potential

health problem; consult a health professional. If your loved one is having difficulty in one or more of these categories, it is time to consider making some changes to ensure his/her safety.

For more information on options available to you, please call the Alzheimer's Association Helpline at 1-800-272-3900. Together we can discuss your situation and help determine what changes will be most beneficial to you and your loved one.