
Dealing with new challenges around the house

For those who are living at home and plan to remain at home it is important to consider and prepare for some of the challenges you may have in the future.

Dementia has a number of symptoms: memory problems, physical difficulties and simple changes in what makes you feel safe and secure. With this comes increasing problems that can make simple things one has been doing for years become more and more difficult. Whilst living alone is harder with dementia, there are several things you can do to reduce the challenges you face.

Forgetting where to store things

It's easy to understand why people with dementia might get confused about where things belong – imagine going to a complete stranger's kitchen and trying to put away all the things in their dishwasher. Whilst putting socks in the wrong drawer might not pose a major health risk, it can be extremely disruptive and make life increasingly difficult for people living with dementia and for those living with them. This problem can be solved easily by the use of clear labels or signage to make it obvious where everything belongs. If possible, use open fronted cupboards or shelves that are easy to see. Grouping things together can also help – for example, in the kitchen, why not put the teaspoon, mugs and teabags together so that it is easier to make a cup of tea.

Forgetting how to use items

If your loved one has an item such as an iron or a kettle that they've had for years then it may still be easy to operate, but newer items can look like the most complicated of gadgets. It can be extremely upsetting to realise suddenly that they are unable to operate an iron, a washing machine or even a home phone.

Not having the strength

Cooking can become more challenging, with heavy saucepans and even the kettle. Carrying piles of washing down the stairs may not be as easy as it once was, since the person living with dementia may experience difficulties with balance. Using knives and even scissors requires precision that may not be there any more, and whilst opening jars and tins sometimes can be challenging for the best of us it may pose more of a challenge for those older in age. There are several tools and gadgets that are ergonomically designed and can be used to help with dexterity problems, tools that make opening cans with ring pulls easier, kettle tippers, cooking baskets and plate holders are all available, however learning to use these new tools can be difficult.

