SAFETY RESOURCES & PLANNING

Changes related to dementia can affect judgment, mobility, and awareness, creating safety concerns at home and in the community. This guide offers practical steps to help caregivers identify risks, make environments safer, and plan ahead, supporting both independence and peace of mind.

1 How Changes in Cognition Affect Safety

Dementia-related changes in cognition can significantly impact a person's ability to stay safe. Understanding how these changes show up in daily life helps caregivers anticipate risks and respond proactively.

Judgement and Decision- Making

- Difficulty assessing risk or consequences (e.g., touching hot surfaces, leaving doors unlocked)
- Impulsive actions without considering safety
- Reduced ability to recognize unsafe situations or ask for help

Awareness and Insight

- Limited awareness of physical limitations or changes in ability
- Reduced insight into memory loss or confusion, leading to resistance to help
- Difficulty recognizing emergencies or understanding what to do in a crisis

Perception and Sensory Processing

- Trouble interpreting visual or spatial information (misjudging steps, shadows, or distances)
- Difficulty distinguishing objects, faces, or hazards
- Heightened sensitivity or reduced awareness of noise, light, or temperature

Attention and Concentration

- Easily distracted, increasing risk during tasks like cooking or crossing streets
- Difficulty following multi-step instructions
- Forgetting to complete tasks, such as turning off appliances

2 Common Dafety Risks

- Falls and injuries due to balance, perception, or attention changes
- Wandering or getting lost
- Medication errors (missed doses or double dosing)
- Kitchen and fire hazards
- Driving safety concerns
- Access to firearms
- Financial vulnerability or scams

Remember: Safety planning is an ongoing process; revisit it regularly as needs change.

3 General Safety

- Keep walkways clear and well-lit
- Secure rugs and cords to prevent tripping
- Install grab bars in bathrooms and railings on stairs
- Use appliances with automatic shut-off
- Lock away sharp objects and cleaning supplies
- Lock away or remove from home- firearms.
- Label drawers and cabinets for easier navigation
- Use pill organizers or automated dispensers
- Keep medications locked and review them regularly

4 Planning Ahead

- Create an emergency plan (contacts, medications, medical info)
- Discuss safety preferences early while the person can participate
- Review legal and financial plans (power of attorney, advance directives)
- Install door alarms or motion sensors
- Use identification jewelry or ID cards
- Inform neighbors and local first responders
- Consider GPS tracking devices if appropriate
- Take breaks and ask for help when needed
- Use respite care and caregiver support groups
- Reach out to healthcare providers or community organizations for guidance

For more information, resources, or support- please call and schedule a consultation with a social worker.

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