



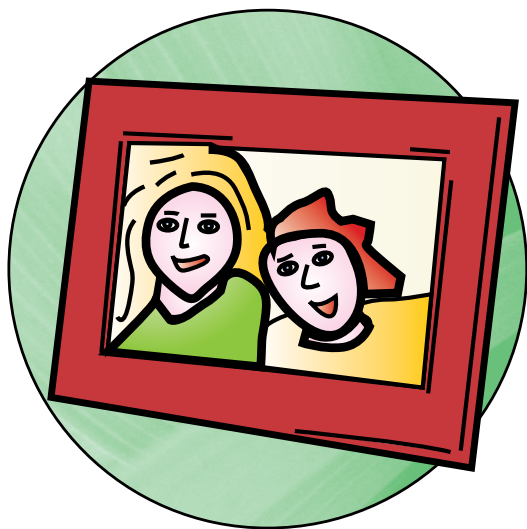
# Leisure and Lifestyle

## Help Sheet 2.4

### *Living with dementia - how the environment, technology and you can help*

This help sheet provides information on how assistive technology and environmental adaptation may be used to support leisure opportunities for a person living at home with dementia.

Active participation in leisure activities provides physical, social and emotional benefits that have positive effects on our health. For many people the changes associated with dementia, such as memory loss, or difficulty with communication, can lead to a gradual withdrawal or exclusion from participating in leisure activities.



*Digital Photo Frames enable family photos, music and commentaries to be downloaded and run as a slide show*

### **Person Centred Response**

All of us have different needs and respond to both the environment and other people around us in different ways. It is critical that any decision to change the environment or use technology follows a person-centred assessment, where the perspectives, needs and choices of the person with dementia are understood and respected.

What works for some people does not always work for others. It is important to continue to provide ongoing evaluation to ensure that any technology or strategies used for supporting independence and safety in the home, remains meaningful to the person and match their needs and abilities.

- **Music and Movies** – era specific movies and music from the 1930's and 1940's and other decades can be purchased at department stores and music outlets. These can support reminiscing and this promotes communication and connection with others.
- **Community Day Centres** provide leisure opportunities that support and encourage social, emotional and physical interaction. Activities are designed for people with a broad range of interests and skills levels.
- **Games, Quizzes and Brain Exercises** – Alzheimer's Australia suggest a number of activities that may be suitable for people living with dementia. They recommend avoiding activities that are beyond the person with dementia's capabilities as this can lead to frustration and a sense of failure.

### **Simple Technology Suggestions**

- **Photographs, Reminiscing and Life History**
  - **Family History/Scrapbooks** are available from craft stores. They are useful for reminiscing and encourage communication. Special Order Family Photo Books can be developed on the home computer and ordered online or through specialist photography stores. Captions can be added to photos and the books are then published as a hard cover life history book.
  - **Talking Photo Albums** vary in size and cost and are available from photographic specialty stores and a variety of retailers.
  - **Digital Photo Frames** enable family photos, music and

commentaries to be downloaded into the frame and run as a slide show. The frames can be placed on dressers, beside tables, or hung on the wall. These frames are useful for linking photographs to people, places and events.

- **Special Order DVD/Family Slide Shows** can be developed on the family home computer, or ordered through photography or specialty stores. The DVDs will run on the computer or TV/DVD. The DVDs can be designed to self start and stop or run on repeat until manually stopped.
- **'Easy Cookbooks'** are large format, spiral bound books with step by step recipes. Photographs are in colour and the pages are laminated so they can be wiped clean. The recipes include microwave, vegetarian, soups, main meals, salads and desserts. They are designed to make following a recipe easier and may be useful in assisting someone who previously enjoyed cooking to actively participate independently or with support and set up assistance. Easy Cook Shopping Cards are also available from [www.easycookbook.org](http://www.easycookbook.org).
- **Simplified appliances**, such as simple use music players, simple remote controls and universal remote controls can also aid independence.

## Advanced Technology Suggestions

- **Computers** – most personal computers have operating systems such as Windows or OSX (Apple Mac) that can be set up to allow more than one person to use the computer. The person who owns or administers the computer can set up individual accounts to allow access to other family members or friends when

the icon (picture) with their name is selected. The administrator protects their own account with a password.

In practical terms this means a user account can be set up which enables the person with dementia to move from the step of logging on through to a screen where the options and internet sites are relevant to the person's interests. The size of the text and the number of sites that can be visited are all capable of being modified and can be restricted. As an example, if computer user with dementia 'John Smith' logs on, he may only have access to certain web sites or games on the system. Access to email and sites where financial information may be at risk can also be limited. If there are concerns around the ability of the person with dementia to safely manage their finances, these concerns should be discussed with the person with dementia and information provided regarding power of attorney and legal support. The NetAlert – Protecting Families Online program has further information on [www.smartonline.gov.au](http://www.smartonline.gov.au).

- **Automated Home Systems** can communicate with and operate home entertainment systems such as the TV, DVD player, radio and music system in your home. It can be programmed by a carer to turn on the TV, radio or music system at a specific time of the day. The system can be designed to operate using touch screen technology, so the person can interact and choose music, radio, TV or movies. Some flexibility in design allows the customer to identify what their interests are, so unwanted extras, such as multiple TV or radio stations can be discarded or excluded from the menu. This can help with reducing confusing choices and simplifying the task.



## Finding Products

For information about specific products and where to get them, see [www.dementiatechnology.org.au](http://www.dementiatechnology.org.au) Professional assessment is advised before any changes are made or products purchased. To find the best solution for your needs and to avoid unnecessary expense, contact the Independent Living Centre.

## Further Information

Technology and the way individuals relate to it are constantly changing. For further information, a dementia friendly home checklist and to view other Help Sheets about how the environment, technology and you can help, please see [www.dementiatechnology.org.au](http://www.dementiatechnology.org.au) or call 1300 275 227 (1300 ASK BCS).

For further information and to discuss your individual needs and:

- assistive technology or home modifications, contact the Independent Living Centre at [www.ilcaustralia.org](http://www.ilcaustralia.org) or 1300 885 886;
- dementia, contact The National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500, or Alzheimer's Australia at [www.alzheimers.org.au](http://www.alzheimers.org.au).

For information about local care and support services, including respite for carers, phone Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres on freecall 1800 052 222\*. For emergency respite support outside business hours, phone freecall 1800 059 059\* (\*Calls from mobile phones are charged at applicable rates).