



# Lighting

## Help Sheet 2.5

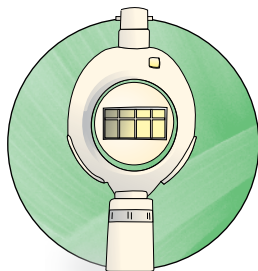
### *Living with dementia - how the environment, technology and you can help*

This help sheet contains suggestions about how assistive technology and changing the environment may assist with supporting the person with dementia and their carer in the home.

#### **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.



*A Sensor Light Adaptor has an infrared sensor to detect movement and switch on the light*

#### **Lighting**

Good lighting is essential. It helps all of us find our way around our environment and allows us to complete everyday tasks. A person who is 60 years old can need two to three times more light than someone who is 20 years old.

For someone who is living with dementia, low light levels or glare may make it even more difficult to identify contrast and depth in their environment.

In practical terms this may mean that they only see a part of an object or do not see the object at all, eg a white toilet sitting on light tiles. Poor lighting can lead to changes in behaviour, is associated with distress and adds to a person's risk of falling.

A person with dementia may experience increased disorientation and distress when waking at night. This may increase their risk of falls and incontinence. Consider vision impairment, as well as memory and other cognitive changes, when reviewing lighting.

#### **Warning Signs**

Indicators that light levels in the home may not be adequate for the person with dementia are:

- They have bruising or abrasions from walking into furniture;
- They experience difficulty finding things or finding their way around their environment;
- They cannot access night lights;
- They are disoriented by glare that is reflected from windows, floors, walls and household appliances;
- They become distressed or agitated at reflected movement in the windows.

## Environmental Suggestions

- Avoid using clear light bulbs or light fittings without a shade as these reflect glare and throw shadows which can be disturbing;
- Fitting sheer translucent curtains to windows allows light in, but filters glare during the day and blocks night time reflections in the glass;
- Be aware that vertical and horizontal blinds can allow small slits of light in which can be disorientating, metal blinds can also reflect light and glare;
- Use matt or non shiny finishes on the floor to assist in reducing surface glare.

## Simple Technology Suggestions

- **Glow in the Dark Strips** can be used around light switches, handrail strips and as stair treads. These strips can assist with finding your way in the dark, with some brands maintaining visibility for up to 100 hours before requiring natural or artificial light to recharge. Consider where you place these strips inside the home as they may be a distraction during the night because the light reflected from the strips cannot be dimmed.
- **Night Lights with Sensors** are small lights that plug directly into a power point. The night light automatically switches on in the evening and off in the morning. This light only works if the power point is switched on.
- **A Sensor Light Adaptor** has an infrared sensor to detect movement and switch on the light. It plugs straight into a light socket or lamp fitting and does not require an electrician to fit. This adaptor can be useful if you need to get up during the night to find your way. It operates on an adjustable timer.

When choosing the wattage of the bulb, please keep in mind that sudden changes in light levels from dark to very bright light can take a number of minutes to adjust to and if too bright can be a falls hazard.

## Advanced Technology Suggestions

- **Automatic Light Switch** is a switch that works on a timer or infrared movement detector. A licensed electrician is required to install this product. You will need to think about where the switch with the movement detector is to be placed, keeping in mind how far you will have to walk in the dark before the sensor turns on the light. If the switch is turned to manual, then the sensor will not work.
- **Bed Sensor Lamp** – is a system where a sensor pad is placed on the bed. When the person gets out of bed the lamp connected to the sensor pad is automatically switched on. The light can be programmed to stay on for a predetermined period of time that suits the carer or user.
- **Home Automated System** uses sensor technology to turn lights on and off and adjust the level of lighting. Sensors are placed in rooms throughout the home to measure changes in light levels and adjust these levels as required to a pre-programmed level that has been set by the home owner. This system can turn off lights at night when you go to bed and on in the morning and during the night if light is needed for visits to the bathroom or kitchen. The lights can be programmed to come on, at 30% of normal brightness, once movement is detected beside the bed, to light a pathway to the toilet.



## 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).