



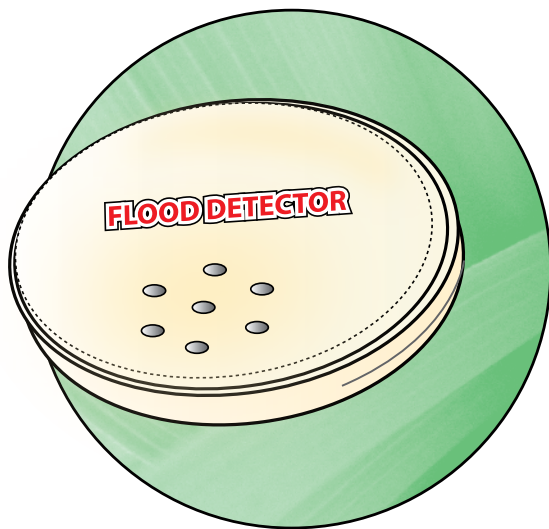
Bathroom/Toilet

Help Sheet 3.1

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 in the bathroom and toilet area to support the independence and safety of people living at home with dementia.

For someone living at home with dementia there can be a number of difficulties associated with using the bathroom and toilet, including perception difficulties, falls, continence problems, hygiene difficulties, behaviour such as placement of inappropriate items in the toilet, and anxiety.



Flood detector detects water overflow activating an alarm and sending an alert through to a call centre

Person Centred Response

The aim of changing the bathroom and using technology is to assist a person to maintain their independence and safety. When considering new technology or changes in the home, it is important to keep in mind how the person with dementia relates to their environment. Involving the person in the decision making process and, where possible, testing the item with them beforehand may mean the difference between success and disappointment.

Environmental Suggestions

The use of colour to contrast or highlight key locations in the home can make it easier for persons with vision or perception difficulties to find these locations, such as:

- A **bathroom door** which has been painted a dark blue to make it stand out in the lighter coloured hallway;
- A **navy blue toilet seat contrasted** against a white bowl, cistern and light wall tiles;
- Stick **contrasting tape on rails** to help a person locate them;
- **Grab rails** which contrast against a lighter coloured wall, such as navy blue against cream tiles, will also support the easy location and identification of rails for people with decreased vision or when glasses are removed such as in the shower; and
- **Non-slip bathroom floor tiles** which contrast with the light coloured tiles on the wall.

Environmental adaptations can support safety and security, for example:

- A **sign or label**, and leaving the toilet door open, can help a person locate the toilet when they need it;
- The combination of a **hobless shower, grab rails, a shower chair** or a **drop down shower seat** and hand held shower fitting (which allows water flow to be directed away from the head and face) can provide for easy access for people who have reduced mobility while supporting their independence;
- **Hinges** which allow for removal of the bathroom door in an emergency, even if the door is closed;

- **Heat lamps** may make it more comfortable to undress and wash;
- A **shower curtain** supports privacy and dignity and can make it easier for the person with dementia to enter the shower recess, as well as a carer if they are needed.

from outside the drawer. It can be installed on wood, plastics, laminates and ceramic tiles and does not draw attention to the fact that the cupboard is locked.

Advanced Technology Suggestions

- **Thermostatic Mixing/Shut Off Valves** – these devices need to be installed by a licensed plumber. Thermostatic mixing valves mix the hot and cold water allowing it to be delivered to the taps at a safe pre-set temperature. Shut down valves work on the principle of preventing water higher than 48°C from flowing out of a tap, and water flow is reduced automatically to a trickle if this temperature is reached. Plumbing supplies and hardware stores can provide more information.
- **Flood Detectors** can be placed on the wall just above the floor line in either the laundry beside the sink or in the bathroom beside the toilet or under the bath. If the sensor detects water overflow the unit activates an alarm within the house and contacts the call centre.
- **Duress Alarm or Personal Emergency Response Pendants** for emergency contact with the call centre or a nominated carer can be attached to the bathroom wall or worn as a pendant in the shower. This product can be installed and used in the home without any hard wiring, making it perfect for areas such as bathrooms.
- **Automated Home Systems** – the lighting in the bathroom or toilet can be operated manually, or be programmed for night time use to come on at 30% brightness automatically once the movement sensor in the bedroom has been activated. The light can also be programmed to turn off after a set time based on personal requirements.



Simple Technology Suggestions

- **Tap Cap** is a cover that has been designed to fit over the top of round tap handles. This cap can be secured over the hot water tap to prevent it being accidentally turned on.
- **Hygiene Products** – rinse free or water free personal hygiene products, that use non-irritating products, contain no alcohol and are pH balanced. There are no-rinse shampoos and conditioners for the hair and no rinse body washes.
- **Power Point Safety Plugs** may reduce electrical hazards, where hairdryers and electric shavers may be used with wet hands or put in water by mistake.
- **Pressure Sensitive Sink Plug or Magi-Plug** is a plug that is designed to prevent water overflow and can be used in sinks, baths and laundry tubs. It is made of rubber and plastic, and has a valve that is pressure activated. The supplier can change the depth at which the activation mechanism works to allow for varying depths of tubs and sinks. The plug also has a coloured temperature sensitive plate which changes colour when the water temperature reads 36°C to alert the user that water may be too hot.
- **Mag Locks** are a magnetic lock system which can be used on drawers and cupboards in the bathroom or anywhere in the home. The lock was designed to be invisible with the locking component fitted to the inside of the cupboard or drawer, while the magnetic key operates the lock

Finding Products

For information about specific products and where to get them, see 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 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 or 1300 885 886;
- dementia, contact The National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500, or Alzheimer's Australia at 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).