



# Bedroom

## Help Sheet 3.2

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

This help sheet provides ideas on how changes in the environment and some items of assistive technology may be used in the bedroom of the family home to support the independence and safety of a person living with dementia.

To maintain independence and safety in the bedroom, it is important to ensure a comfortable environment, prevent falls, make it easier to find the toilet at night, enable safe wandering/walking about at night, as well as support healthy sleep for others living in the same home.

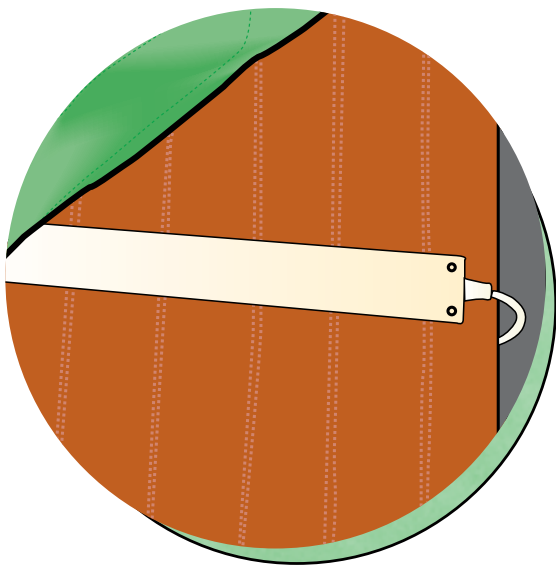
#### **Person Centred Response**

Sleep disturbances can occur frequently for people living with dementia. There can be many reasons why a person with dementia is experiencing difficulty with sleeping. Also see the Help Sheet on Sleep Disturbances.

A person living with dementia will experience changes in their ability to interact with other people and their environment over time. 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. 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 remain meaningful to the person and match their needs and abilities.

#### **Environmental Suggestions**

- **Wardrobe** – set aside an area of the wardrobe for easy access to seasonal clothing. Use another part of the wardrobe which can be locked for non-seasonal clothing and items that might not be safe.
- **Contrasting coloured bottom and top sheets** may help a person find their way into bed.
- **Mirrors** – if seeing their own or others reflections in mirrors is distressing or confusing to the person with dementia, remove or cover all mirrors.
- **Labels or Signs** placed on shelves, cupboards and doors can assist in locating items or finding a room in the house. Signs and labels need to be clear. Letters should be large with a strong contrast, for example, black writing on a white background. Signs can also have a picture of the items inside the cupboard. Placement of signs is important. A sign that is placed too high will not be noticed by a person who is stooped. As dementia progresses the tendency is to look downwards. Signs that are laminated with, or painted with, gloss surfaces are unlikely to be noticed because of the glare reflected from them. Low glare laminate is available from office suppliers and does not reflect glare.



*Chair/Bed Occupancy Sensors are placed under a chair pad, or on top of a mattress, and are linked to a control unit which communicates to a call centre*

- **Contenance** – information on continence products, including bed protection, is available from the Independent Living Centre (ILC) in your state or territory.

The National Continence Helpline is a free, telephone advisory service. The Helpline is staffed by experienced continence nurse advisors who provide information, education and advice to callers with incontinence or people who are caring for someone with incontinence. Contact the National Continence Helpline on **1800 330 066**.

## Simple Technology Suggestions

- **Alarm Clocks/Reminder Devices**– a talking alarm clock can act as a reminder device, which communicates the time by using an electronic synthesized voice when the alarm goes off.
- **Beds** – there are a number of electronically and manually operated beds with height adjustment and tilting functions. Setting the bed at the right height can make getting in and out of bed easier for persons with limited strength or bed mobility.
- **Sensor Lights** – there are a number of different types of sensor lights available.
- **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 and it provides a soft light to guide your way. More information is available in the help sheets on Falls and Lighting.
- **Relaxing music** may assist a person to sleep.

## Advanced Technology Suggestions

- **An Emergency Call Assistance Button** located at the bed head. When pressed, it communicates via the telephone line to a pre-set phone number and can be cancelled by the phone handset if pressed in error.
- **Automated Home 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 lights off at night when you go to bed, and on in the morning and during the night if needed for visits to the bathroom or kitchen.
- A **‘Good Night Button’** which switches off all lights and locks doors can be programmed to operate from the automated system and is usually located beside the bed. Once the person is in bed all of the lights can be switched off and the doors locked. This switch system has the capacity to be operated remotely by an operator or relative.
- **Chair and Bed Occupancy Sensors** placed under a chair pad and on top of the mattress monitor movement. If the person leaves their bed or chair and does not return the unit communicates with a call centre via the telephone line. The sensors can be programmed with a time delay to prevent false alarms if the person wishes to use the toilet or make a drink. The blind can be closed and opened automatically using a switch beside the bed and remotely through the smart system.



### 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).