



# Garages and Sheds

## Help Sheet 3.5

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

This help sheet provides information on how changes to the environment and some items of assistive technology may be used to assist in maintaining the safety of a person with dementia when accessing the garage or shed.

The garage or shed may provide the person with dementia the opportunity to be involved in activities that interest them. However, they can contain many hazardous substances and dangerous tools and equipment.

When considering what technology to use or changes you wish to make to the garage or shed, it is important to keep in mind how the person with dementia has related to this environment in the past and wherever possible involve them in the decision making process.



*Sound and Movement Monitor can be used by the carer to alert them to activity in another area of the house*

### **Person Centred Response**

Pottering in the garage or shed may prompt memory and provide the person with dementia a sense of enjoyment and pleasure. Maintaining existing skills, as far as possible, can boost the confidence of a person with dementia and assist in alleviating anxiety.

The person with dementia may not however respond to dangers as they have in the past and it is advisable that as well as putting safety measures in place to avoid potentially dangerous accidents, they be closely monitored whilst in the shed or garage.

It is also important to continue to provide ongoing evaluation to ensure that any technology or strategies used for supporting function and safety in the home remain meaningful to the person and match their needs, choices and abilities.

### **Environmental Suggestions**

- Pathways to the shed or garage should be flat and even and with a surface that is slip resistant. To improve safety, consider path lights or glow in the dark strips available from hardware stores.
- Minimise clutter and remove potentially flammable or dangerous materials from in and around the garage or shed to reduce the risk of trips, falls and other accidents.
- Avoid using clear light bulbs or light fittings without a shade as these reflect glare and throw shadows which can be disturbing.
- Reduce both day-time and night-time glare and reflections on windows by putting up coverings such as thin net curtains. Reflections in the glass can be misinterpreted as a stranger in or outside the shed or garage or give the person with dementia the feeling that they are in an unfamiliar environment.
- Remove internal locks from garages or sheds to ensure the person with dementia is not able to accidentally lock themselves inside.
- Hinges which allow for removal of the door in an emergency, even if the door is closed.

- Disguising a door leading to the street may reduce the likelihood of a person with dementia wandering. Consider disguising the door either by painting the door and frame so that it blends in with the surrounding décor, or placing a full sized photographic mural on the door to reduce the visibility of the door.
- Putting a 'No Exit' sign on a door leading to the street may be enough to stop a person with dementia from exiting through that door.

### Simple Technology Suggestions

- **Lockable Cabinet** – when mounted on a wall, or placed inside a cupboard, and securely locked, may be useful for storing potentially dangerous tools or hazardous items. These cabinets can be purchased from most large hardware or homeware stores.
- **'Mag Lock'** is a discreet magnetic lock system which can be used on drawers and cupboards in the garage or shed or anywhere in the home, to store things that are unsafe for the person with dementia.
- **Pad Locks** on any tool boxes will prevent the person with dementia accessing potentially dangerous tools and equipment.
- **Sound and Movement Monitor** (Retails as a baby monitor) can be used by the carer to monitor changes to activity levels whilst allowing the person with dementia some independence.
- 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.

- An **Engine Immobilizer** will temporarily interrupt the power supply to systems in the car with aim of preventing the car from being driven without the owner's knowledge. Further information on this type of system can be obtained from the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council on 1300 132 146 or the Motor Registry in your state or territory.

### Advanced Technology Suggestions

- **Infrared Door Beams** are small units which are placed near doorways or windows to monitor movement by projecting an invisible infrared beam across the passageway. When someone passes through the beam a built in buzzer is activated. Different models and price ranges are available.
- A cheaper alternative is a **croaking frog ornament** that makes a noise when movement is detected nearby.



### 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).