



# Laundry

## Help Sheet 3.7

### *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 laundry to support the independence, safety and security of people living at home with dementia.

There can be a number of risks associated with the laundry. Many household products used in the laundry are hazardous. Appliances such as the iron, washing machine or dryer have the potential to cause fire or electrocution if not used correctly.

#### **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.

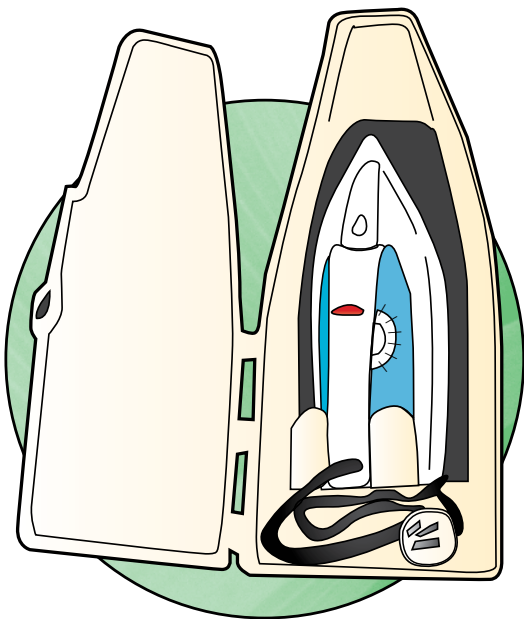
What works for some people does not always work for others. It is important to continue to provide ongoing evaluation to ensure that any technology or strategies used for supporting independence and safety in the home, remains meaningful to the person and match their needs and abilities.

#### **Environmental Suggestions**

- **Having a set place for regularly used items** can make it easier to find them when needed, and may help to maintain independence.
- **Moving items that are regularly used** down to a level between shoulder and hip height can assist by bringing the items into your field of vision thus making them easier to see and reach.
- **Simplifying the environment** – removing excess clutter can make it easier to find things.
- **Using labels and signs** or removing some cupboard doors may help a person find and replace items.

#### **Simple Technology Suggestions**

- The **‘Tap Cap’** is a cover that has been designed to fit over the top of round tap handles. The tap cap can be secured over the hot water tap to prevent it being accidentally turned on.
- **Irons** are now sold with a number of safety features. Keep in mind not all irons have all of the safety features listed below so you will need to ask at the time of purchase. Safety features include an immediate cut off if the iron is knocked onto its side; auto cut off if the iron is placed face down on any surface and left for longer than 30 seconds; automatic cut off after 15 minutes if the iron is not used.



*Iron Safe is a small storage unit for hot irons which can be mounted on the wall or placed inside a cupboard*

- **Iron Safe** is a small storage unit which can be mounted on the wall or placed inside a cupboard. As an iron takes approximately 30 minutes to cool down after switching off, the hot iron can be placed inside the unit to restrict access. There is a heat resistant backing plate and a space for the cord. The cover to the storage unit can then be closed.
- A **Lockable Cabinet** that can be mounted on the wall or placed inside a cupboard out of view is useful for storing household cleaning products that are poisonous. These cabinets can be purchased from most larger hardware outlets or homeware stores.
- **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 that the activation mechanism works at to allow for varying depths of tubs and sinks. The plug also has a coloured temperature sensitive plate which reacts to changes in water temperature. The heat sensitive pad changes colour when the water temperature reads 36° to alert the user that water may be too hot.
- **Appliance Locks** can be used with the fridge, washing machines or dryers. The lock keeps the appliances securely closed. Usually a combination of pressing and pulling on the lock is all that is required to open and gain access to the appliance. Use unobtrusive locks.
- A **Combined Washer/Dryer** may assist a person to maintain independence with cleaning of clothes.

## 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 degrees from flowing out of a tap. Water flow is reduced automatically to a trickle if the temperature reaches this setting. Plumbing supplies and hardware stores can provide more information.
- **Flood Detectors** can be placed on the wall just above the floor line in either your laundry, beside the sink, or in the bathroom, beside the toilet, or under the bath. If the sensor detects water the unit activates an alarm within the house as well as contacting the call centre.
- **Automated Home Systems** can use wireless or ‘hard wiring’ systems. They can be programmed to operate curtains, lights, heating, and security, as well as monitoring the use of equipment and utilities such as water usage for the shower and laundry. If water is left running for longer over a pre-set period (e.g. water in laundry tub), an alert is communicated to the home owner using an automatic voice announcement through the telephone. If the person does not respond to this announcement, the system contacts the call centre and will automatically shut off the water supply.



### 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).