



# For the person with dementia who chooses to live alone

Many older people choose to remain living in their own home alone. This decision is based on a number of reasons. Most who make this decision do so to remain independent. A few have no family to whom they can turn for assistance, while others simply do not wish to live with their family or believe it will make life difficult for all concerned. Residential care or nursing home placement is certainly something few, if any of us, ever wish to consider for ourselves.

For many, independence is of greater priority than physical safety. Since Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive diseases, the physical and behavioural symptoms experienced will gradually get worse over time. It is therefore important to plan in advance for any assistance you may need to help maintain your independence.

Consider the following suggestions:

- \* Ensure work, financial, legal and health matters are addressed as soon as possible after receiving your diagnosis. If left until late in the disease, the power to make decisions about these matters may be taken away from you.
- \* Inform your bank if you have difficulties with keeping track of your accounts, bill payments and other banking needs. They may provide special services for people with Alzheimer's disease.
- \* Arrange for direct payments of Centrelink cheques, pensions and the like, into your bank account.
- \* Stay in close contact with your doctor and specialist for regular review of your medical situation. There are other treatable illnesses which, if left untreated, can exacerbate the symptoms of dementia.
- \* Seek information about getting assistance in the

home with housekeeping, general home maintenance, transportation and home nursing.

- \* Plan for home meal deliveries if available in your area.
- \* Arrange regular home maintenance checks eg. through Home Assist Secure.
- \* Have a smoke alarm fitted and check it regularly.
- \* Leave a set of keys to your house with a trusted neighbour.
- \* Keep a list of emergency numbers, in large print, next to the phone.
- \* Ask a friend or relative to assist in arranging your clothes and drawers to make it easier for you to find what you need to get dressed.
- \* Label cupboards and drawers with words or pictures that describe their content.
- \* Arrange for a daily visit or telephone contact by friends, relatives or a community worker to remind you of meal times, appointments or to take your medications.
- \* Label photos with the names of those you see most often.
- \* Mark days off on a calendar to keep track of time.
- \* Maintain your daily routines wherever possible.

## Driving

- \* There will come a time when it is no longer safe for you to drive.
- \* The Department of Transport can assess your driving skills if you are unsure whether or not you should drive.

- \* Plan ahead by investigating alternative transport in your area.
- \* Taxi subsidies are available. Contact the Department of Transport for details.
- \* Sell the car and put the money towards transport fares.
- \* Have a family member or friend drive you where you need to go.

It is important to realise that:

- \* The changes you are experiencing are due to the disease.
- \* As always, you will have good days and not so good days.
- \* The disease affects each person differently and the symptoms experienced will vary.
- \* It is normal to experience many and various emotions such as anger, depression, frustration, confusion, sadness and loneliness.
- \* However a good sense of humour can help you through the tough times. Laughter is therapeutic. Engage in activities that you enjoy and that are fun.
- \* Know that you are not alone. There are people who understand and can support you however much (or little) you wish.

With simple adjustments and safety measures in place, you should be able to maintain your independence for a considerable length of time. However, prepare yourself for the time when you can no longer live on your own. Alzheimer's disease and most other dementias are accompanied by increasing dependence on others.

**With any questions or concerns you have in relation to dementia and its management, or for specific information on services available in your area and how to access them, please contact the Alzheimer's Association of Queensland on 1800 639 331.**