



Maintaining the Home:

Cognitive Difficulties

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Cognitive Difficulties

When a person is disoriented, even familiar environments may seem hostile. People with diminished cognition may not react quickly to stimuli such as a hot burner or a sharp knife, and may not be able to distinguish or sort competing signals. They also may have trouble remembering or understanding information and may process it slowly.

They may wander away and then not be able to remember their way home or recall their phone numbers and addresses.

Modifications for Cognitive Difficulties

For a person with this condition, the home must be made as safe as possible and yet retain visual familiarity.

Create barriers to keep the person from wandering away from home or straying into dangerous areas such as stairways. Barriers include fences or hedges around the yard, screens on doors and windows, automatic door-closing devices, gates, locked doors, alarms on doors to the outside, double-key locks or locks placed beyond the person's reach . Reverse locks on the bedroom door, bed rails, room-darkening shades or a monitor can help ensure that the person does not wander around at night.

The person with cognitive difficulties should not have access to dangerous items such as knives, hot burners, electrical equipment and outlets,

household chemicals and medicines. Family members might put childproof plugs in electrical outlets, place guards over radiators, put covers on stove or range burners and install locks on refrigerators, freezers, medicine cabinets and closets that contain cleaning supplies.

Make sure the layout of furniture and pathways through the home are familiar and safe. Use furnishings that are stable and don't have sharp corners. Remove scatter rugs, sharp objects and clutter.

Sometimes it is possible to enhance cognition. Placing pictures of familiar activities and individuals on the entrances to various rooms can help a person remember.

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*This resource is one in a series on **Maintaining the Home** which include:*

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Make a Basic Toolkit for Simple Home Repairs
Selection and Use of Home Cleaning Products
Discovering the Secrets of Successful Storage

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Fireplace and Chimney Care

Cooling

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Air Conditioner
Ceiling Fans

Plumbing

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How to Unclog a Toilet
Repairing Dripping Faucets

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How to Replace a Fuse

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Choosing a Water Heater

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Dryer Care and Dryer Cleaning
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