



INDEPENDENT LIVING
CENTRE NSW

Helpful Handbook for Memory Loss



PRODUCTS ■ EQUIPMENT ■ INFORMATION ■ ADVICE

May 2007



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INTRODUCTION

When our memory is working well, we don't realise how much we use it for everything we do. We use it to recall things, organise ourselves and keep track of events. Only when we have memory problems do we realise how much we use it – without thinking!

If you have early stage dementia or concerns about your memory, this is the time to think about the future. With careful planning and by changing habits now, you can look after yourself and carry on your regular activities well into the future.

Using this handbook

There are many publications that tell you about the effects of memory loss and dementia. This handbook is intended as a handy reference about products, devices, tips and hints. For more details on products and prices contact your local Independent Living Centre by phone, email, or fax. To find your nearest Centre go to the Contacts page, or phone 1300 885 886.

In the text you will see products and strategies highlighted in **red**. These are listed in the Product Listing for easy reference. Items marked in **blue** are links to other sections of this handbook or a product website.

Read the sections you are most interested in first. Come back to the handbook when you are ready for more information.



Independent Living Centres provide free information and advice about products and services to help with everyday living. These Centres do not sell products but can tell you where to get them and an estimated cost. This is a community service funded by state governments.

National Telephone: 1300 885 886

National Website: www.ilcaustralia.org

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Everyone is different

Dementia affects different people in different ways. Some people can do a difficult crossword, but not cook a meal. Others can keep household accounts, but not write a letter. Everyone misplaces items, forgets appointments and has difficulty remembering names. These incidents, however, become more frequent as time passes.

Home modifications

If you are starting to have any difficulties showering, preparing meals, or moving around, you might need some modifications to your home.

It is best to have modifications done now. If you leave it until later, you might not remember where things are or how they work. Changing cupboards, moving furniture around, installing new appliances, and even changing the type of taps might cause confusion if done later on.

Establish habits

Establishing habits and routines will help guide you through memory lapses. This means doing things the same way, in the same order and in the same place. This will in turn, help you to maintain your social life and enjoyment of hobbies.

If you are not an organised person it might be difficult to establish strict routines, but it will be worth the effort if you can.



Get to know the local shops and local community services. Although you may go to several shopping centres now, choose one that is easy to get to - and easy to find your way around - and use it all the time.

If you don't think you can learn new habits, stick to old ways of doing things.

Main things to do now

- **Get to know your surroundings** and local community very well
- Learn how to make full use of the helpful and automatic features of appliances
- Sort through belongings and paperwork and store them logically
- **Discard things you don't need** to reduce clutter and confusion
- Create set places for keeping items like keys, money and tablets
- Buy any new appliances and gadgets now and learn how they work



AROUND THE HOUSE



Keep things simple

The main thing to remember is to keep things simple. By reducing your options, the fewer decisions you have to make. That means less chance of getting confused. **Create routines** and **automate** what you can. It will reduce the likelihood of misplacing items and forgetting things. It also takes the worry out of wondering if you have remembered to do things.

Household appliances

The fewer gadgets you have, the less likely you are to get confused about which one to use and how to use it. So, give away, store or discard appliances you rarely or never use.

Reducing utensils, gadgets and appliances also reduces clutter. Less clutter means that your eyes can focus on the task at hand. You are less likely to get distracted.

If possible, replace appliances that have complicated dials with ones that have **simple instructions**. Dials and knobs with few choices will be easier to manage. For example, ON / OFF and HIGH / LOW knobs. Dials and knobs that turn are usually easier to recognise and understand than pressure sensitive pads.

Also look for appliances that have safety features. Replace old heaters and bar radiators with heaters that have **cut off switches**. For more on safety see the section on **Safety and Security**.

The Australian Consumers Association produces a magazine, "Choice". This often has a section on easy-to-use appliances. You can buy back copies of Choice by phoning: 1800 069 552 or going to their website www.choice.com.au



Finding things

If you get disorientated easily, place names or **pictures on the doors of each room** in the house. For example, place a picture of a toilet on the toilet door, and a bed on the bedroom door. Otherwise, leave the doors open. In the same way, place **signs on cupboards** to identify contents.

It is easier to remember what you are looking for if you can see it. But if you have too many things in view, it can be cluttered and confusing. You will need to find the right balance for yourself.

Managing the mail

Create a system for managing the mail that other people can also follow. Once you have a method tell your family what it is. For example, “All mail is opened and stored in the basket next to the phone”. Or, “Any bills to be paid are put on the fridge and paid on Wednesdays”.

By minimising the amount of mail you receive you will minimise confusion. Cancel mail, newsletters and catalogues from companies you no longer deal with by putting “Return to Sender” on the envelope and posting it back. This will help sort the important mail from nuisance mail. A “NO JUNK MAIL” notice on your letterbox could also help.

Managing the mail can be done in conjunction with creating a “message centre”. See the section on [Communicating and Conversing](#) for more information.



Make things automatic

Sensor lights are useful when getting up in the night. They stay on as long as they detect movement. Some can be set to come on when you get out of bed and switch off five or ten minutes later. Sensor lights are also useful outdoors.

Vision Glow strips can be applied around light switches, skirting boards and step edges. The strips help guide you around so you don't have to turn on lights and disturb others in the household at night.

Automatic timers and switches are a great help because there is less to remember. **Timer clocks** that plug into power points can be programmed to turn table lamps on and off at set times.

These timers can also be used for other appliances such as heaters and electric blankets. However, take care they don't pose a fire hazard. Timer clocks can be bought from regular electrical appliance stores.

Home automation systems

If you have a computer you can install a **software program** that lets you control things by a voice command. It can turn on and off appliances such as the DVD player and the television. There are several **automatic systems** available. Your nearest **Independent Living Centre** has more information about systems. You might want to ask a family member to help.

More advanced **home automation systems** can be set for regular activities, such as switching off lights at night. It can be pre-set to run a sequence of activities at a touch of a button. The system can be set up for activation in the morning and evening, when leaving the house and upon returning home. For example, the "Goodnight" button leaves the bedroom lights on, turns off all other house lights, closes the curtains, and turns off the heating system.

Automated systems take the worry out of wondering if everything is switched on or off. Most automated systems also have a manual control or override. If you install an automated system while you can learn new things it will make life easier in the future.



COMMUNICATING & CONVERSING



Remembering to tell people things

To help remember things you have to tell other people, create a “message centre”. It should be in a room you visit regularly and a place you can see easily. The “message centre” can be as simple as a notice board and a large diary. Other people can leave you messages and reminders as well.

The “message centre” is also a good place to put important letters and bills.

A **whiteboard** or **corkboard** is handy for putting up reminders of things you have to tell other people, such as, “Tell Kim I have a doctor’s appointment on Monday”. If you are likely to forget your thoughts by the time you get to the whiteboard, carry a small notepad and pencil with you and write thoughts as they come to mind. They can be fixed to the whiteboard or corkboard. **Post-it Notes®**, which have an adhesive strip, are handy for this purpose. You can also give yourself reminders with this method.

A **large desk diary** can be put to many uses. The diary can be part of your message centre set-up. It should be left open so you can easily see messages. Put in appointments and important events and information for yourself and other people to see. It will also help you recall past events.

The diary can also be used by other people to note what help they have given you. Anyone reading the diary will know what’s been done or what still needs doing. This can be reassuring if you cannot remember if something has been done.



Remembering telephone numbers

The simplest system is a **telephone index book** next to the phone. Put the most important names and numbers inside the front cover, as well as in the index. A list of important and frequently dialled numbers pinned to the wall by the phone is also helpful.

If you have not used the speed-dial or auto-dial facility on your phone before, it could be useful to set it up now. You might like to ask someone to help you. You can set the phone to dial the full telephone number by entering just one or two digits. Use it for your most important or frequently dialled numbers. For example, 01 for your friend and 02 for your doctor.

The **Smart Caller Blue Phone** has a set of large auto-dial buttons where you can put photos of people, or write names. This means you don't have to remember numbers, only the person. This multi-purpose phone can also be linked to other alarm systems and a monitoring service. See the section on **Safety and Security** for more information about these systems.

Finding the phone

If you are likely to leave the phone off the hook, a wall-mounted phone might prevent this from happening. If you see the handset hanging, you will know it is off the hook.

If you are likely to misplace the handset of a cordless phone, it might be worth getting a phone with a cord. That way the base and handset won't get separated and you won't need to worry about recharging.

The newer **cordless phones** with a digital display are useful for identifying who is calling. If you enter into the memory the names and phone numbers of people you call, when they call you, the display screen will show their name.

Cordless phones run on batteries and need recharging. Develop a system for making sure you recharge the phone each day.



Making the most of a mobile phone

Mobile phones have some advantages over a landline phone. When you set up the contacts list with names and numbers, the caller's name will show on the display screen when they are calling you.

Enter names into the mobile's phone book that will identify family members: For example, Lin - wife, Lee - daughter.

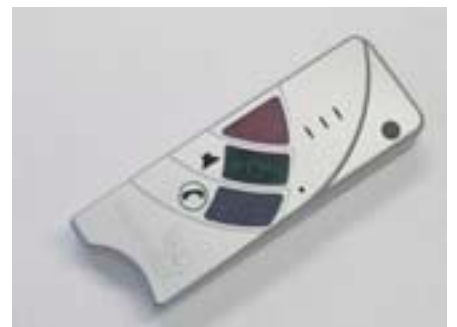
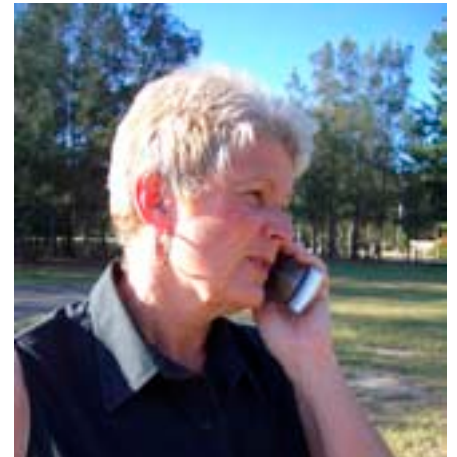
Many mobile phones have voice activation for dialling numbers automatically. You might want to ask for help with this.

The **Vital Call Mobile Companion** is a simple mobile phone and emergency call system with just three-buttons. Once set up, the press of the button will quick-dial a family member or the response centre.

Communicating with others

Communicating by telephone can be difficult if you can't always find the right words. This is where **video phones** are very useful. Being able to see each other means you can use your face and hands to help with communication. It is also possible to show things to each other. This system only works if both people have a video phone.

If you are familiar with **email**, sending messages by email might be a good way of communicating. This is good if you can recall words better in writing, or need more time to think of the right word.



Telling people important medical information

Stress and illness can make communicating more difficult. If you have an accident or feel very unwell while you are out, you will need to communicate health problems or medication advice to other people.

A **Medic-Alert** bracelet or talisman on a neck chain will tell other people important information immediately.

Always carry a card with your name and emergency details in your wallet. The **Alzheimer's Australia identification card** is useful for this purpose.

You might want people to be patient with you while you remember things. If so, carry a card that says something like, "I have a memory problem, give me time to think." Or "I have difficulty finding the right words, please give me more time".



MONEY MANAGEMENT



Setting up a system

This is the time to get organised with your finances. A good system will allow you to stay in charge of your money for longer. It is a good idea to involve someone you trust. Show them your system and where to get information about your accounts.

Managing money is often linked with legal issues such as making sure you have a Will and having an “**Enduring Power of Attorney**” set up. You can find out more from your local solicitor, Citizens Advice Centre, or local community legal service. To find your nearest community legal centre, visit www.naclc.org.au or phone their national office on 02 9264 9595.

Preparing for the future

Sorting out your money requires the help of someone you trust. This could be one or more family members, your bank manager or solicitor. Whomever you choose should also have Enduring Power of Attorney. Consider giving this person access to your account with a second card and their own **PIN number**. This will help in times of illness or difficulty. You can have two people operate your account and sign for major transactions if you prefer.

Together, make a list of all your accounts. Include all the bank details, name, address, BSB number and account number. Combine as many accounts as possible into one account to simplify things.

List all regular income and payments. A **year planner** might be useful for this purpose, especially if you have income from investments or anticipate share dividends.



Paying bills

If you do not have a system for organising bills, choose a noticeable place for putting unpaid bills. Develop a system of putting bills in this place when they arrive. The section on [Communicating and Conversing](#) describes how to create a “message centre”. You can use this message centre to organise your bills as well.

Regular bills such as telephone, electricity, gas and water can be paid using [Direct Debit](#). Information about Direct Debit is usually on the bill. If you sign up to this process, the bill gets paid automatically from your bank account. You don't have to worry about paying these bills, or having the service cut off. You will need to make sure there is always enough money in your account to pay these bills.

Other bills such as rent and insurances can be handled in a similar way. It is a good idea to make an appointment with your bank to organise as many automatic payments as you can.

If you purchase items regularly from a specific shop, ask for a monthly account. Payments can be made monthly and a record kept of spending. Do the same for services such as gardening and house cleaning.

If you use a [credit card](#), consider reducing the upper spending limit to only what you need. You are then less likely to create unintended debt. Alternatively, change your credit card to a [debit card](#), also with an appropriate upper limit. Discuss this with your family and bank.

Wallets and purses

If you use more than one [wallet or purse](#) to separate cash for different purposes, you could get confused about which wallet to use. Consider using just one wallet for your cash.

A wallet or purse with two note compartments makes looking for cash simpler. Cash can be kept in one compartment and receipts in the other. Using a debit card will reduce the need to have cash in different places.



REMEMBERING THINGS



Day, date and time

A **newspaper** delivered daily is an easy and reliable way to remember the day and date. Used in conjunction with a diary it can remind you of appointments and activities. Develop a system for discarding old newspapers to avoid confusion.

Calendar clocks display the time, date, day of the week and month. Position the clock in a place that's readily seen such as on top of the television or in the kitchen. Once you know the day and date you can check your diary for appointments and tasks. Quality batteries usually last twelve months, so put a reminder note in your diary to change the batteries in twelve months.

Cable TV services such as Foxtel, usually have a channel providing day, date and time and a weather channel.

A **radio alarm clock** can be set to alarm on the hour to get the time, day and weather when you wake up. The radio needs to be tuned to a station that reports the day and weather. You may want to make a note of the date and the weather so you can refer to it later.

Seasonal changes

Apart from the date, **orientation boards** display the season and weather. This helps with dressing appropriately for the weather, as well as general orientation to the time of year. Someone else might need to change the details each day. Home-made orientation boards work just as well and can be made to suit you.

In south eastern parts of Australia, just before the start of daylight saving time, the early **mornings can be very bright**. This can be confusing if you are not aware of the time. It may cause you to get up too early and possibly disturb other household members from their sleep. Obviously, heavy drapes on all windows will help solve the problem. They need to be opened during the day to keep the routine of recognising day and night.



Remembering events

A simple **diary** can be used to record appointments, upcoming events, and messages between you and others. Keep the diary in a prominent place such as next to the phone. This makes it handy for recording any plans as they are discussed. It's also a good idea to attach a pen to the diary. See the section on [Communicating and Conversing](#) for more information about a 'message centre'.

Clocks that record messages can remind you of events at set times. **Voice recording alarm clocks** sound the message and repeat it until it is turned off. You may need some help, so ask a close friend or family member to record the messages. Hearing a familiar voice can be reassuring.

Electronic diaries or personal digital assistants such as **Palm Pilots** and mobile phones have calendars that can be programmed for reminders. The device sounds when the set reminder time arrives. The appointment or event is displayed on the screen. These devices run on rechargeable batteries, so set up a system to make sure they get recharged.

Remembering the past

Sometimes remembering dates of past events can be difficult and frustrating. Make an album of memories with labelled pictures of people and events with dates. This will help you remember recent events and reminisce about the past. The **PicFolio Minutes Album** is a flip photo album with a magnetic clasp, which makes it freestanding.



Remembering where you put things

Put keys, pen, wallet, diary and other important items in the same place every time. This reduces the frustration of forgetting where you last put them. It will allow you to use all your mental energy for the task at hand instead of looking for things.

Designate special places for things you are likely to misplace and find a way of marking the spot. For example, a special hook or dish for keys, a hanging pocket for a diary, and a pot for pens and pencils. Label the dish, hook, pocket and pot to act as a reminder. A hook for a handbag or hanging pocket for a wallet could be useful too. A row of coat hooks is another way of keeping important things together.

You can also find things by using a beeping gadget. The **Wireless Key Finder** has four beeping tags that you can attach to small items such as keys. When you press the button on the transmitter a beeping sound will come from the tag. By following the direction of the beeping sound you can find the misplaced item. The transmitter, however, needs to be kept in the same place all the time for this idea to work. It is battery operated.

Finding things in cupboards and drawers

Clutter creates confusion and makes it hard to organise thoughts and find things easily. Clean out drawers and cupboards and discard items you no longer use.

You'll find what you are looking for in drawers and cupboards if you can see at a glance what you want. **Drawer dividers** help sort contents so you can see what you are looking for. Label the drawers and cupboard doors with the name of the contents for extra simplicity.

Clear plastic food storage containers show their contents and this can help you to tell one from another. Removing cupboard doors might help if you can't remember what is in each cupboard.



Remembering to take your keys

A sign on the door is the simplest way of reminding yourself to take your keys with you. Convert your locks to allow a **single master key**. It means you don't have to search through a bunch of keys to find the right one. It also means you only need to give family members one key to gain access to your house.

You can safely store a spare set of keys outside your house in a security box. The **Storakey** is a good example of this kind of box, which is opened by putting in a code number. Only people who know the code can open it. This means that in an emergency family and friends who know the code can access your house.

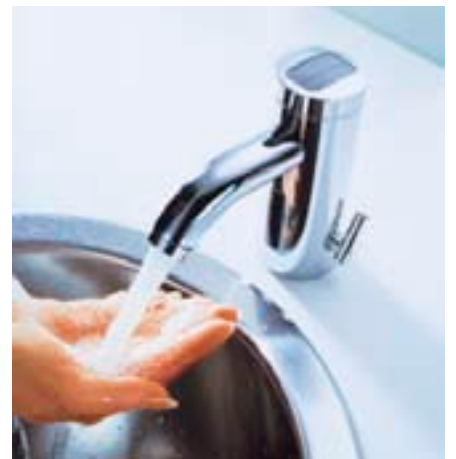
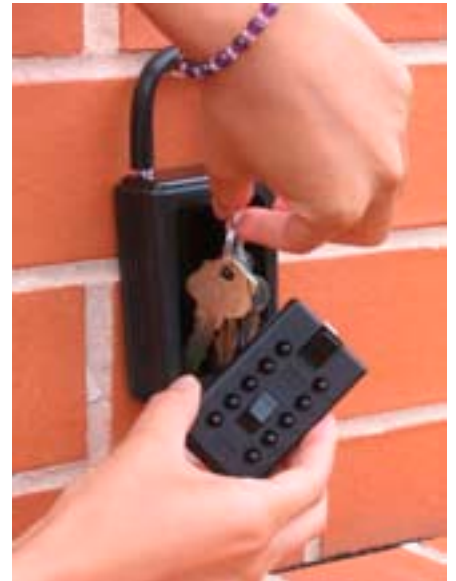
You can eliminate the need for keys by installing a **keypad door lock** device. When the correct code is entered the door is opened. Remembering the code might be a concern. Choose a number that you use regularly now and will most likely remember in the future. Birthday dates are useful for this purpose but may not be the most secure option.

Remembering to turn off taps

Sensor taps don't need turning on or off. They are activated by movement. When your hand is near the tap it comes on and when you take your hand away, it turns off.

Not everyone finds sensor taps helpful. Some people get confused if they cannot see a tap handle. In this case, **spring-loaded taps** might be a better option. They turn off automatically after a set time.

The **Magiplug** prevents baths and sinks from overflowing. It releases water when a certain water pressure is reached. A reminder sign to put the plug in the bath or sink might also be required if you are likely to forget to put in the plug.



Remembering to turn off appliances

A sign next to each appliance is simple and effective - for example "Switch off after use". Signs last longer if they are laminated.

The Vigil-Aide **Electric and Gas Stove Isolation System** turns off the gas or electric stove at a pre-set time, usually twenty minutes. In the later stages of dementia a switch to prevent operation of the stove or oven may be required for safety.

Microwave cooking may be a safer alternative. If you haven't used a microwave for cooking meals before, this is a good time to learn and practice the techniques.

Appliances that beep or switch off if left on are helpful. The Sunbeam **Ultra Safety Auto Cut-Out Iron** will switch off after 15 minutes when left in the upright position and after 10 minutes in the horizontal position.

Power-point timers automatically switch appliances off at a pre-set time. The appliance is plugged into the timer and the timer into the power point. **Count down timers**, such as the HPM Countdown Timer counts down and switches off after four hours. If four hours is a risk, **electronic timers** can be set at shorter intervals.

With the **Power 5 Box**, you can pre-set your appliance to switch off after 15 or 20 minutes each time you use it. Appliances can be plugged into the Box and programmed to suit you and the appliance. For example, an electric frying pan can be set to 15 minutes, and an iron to 30 minutes.

Remembering where to get services and help

Compile a list of your **local services** (hairdresser, accountant, solicitor) and community support services (community bus, home care). List their contact details so you know whom to contact. If you have brochures of services, save them all in one folder so you don't have to search for them.



COOKING, SHOPPING & CLEANING



Cooking meals

Cooking a meal is a complex affair. It requires the coordination of several tasks in a particular order. Remembering which step comes before another could become more difficult. Instead of relying on your memory, use a **recipe book**. You can make one yourself for your regular dishes.

Write out the ingredients and the step by step instructions in a special book or use a set of card files. This may seem silly for something you have cooked for years, but it will reduce reliance on memory. You don't have to keep thinking about what you have done already and what needs to be done next.

The **Easy Cook Book** has step-by-step easy recipes with pictorial instructions. Shopping cards are also provided with the list and photo of all of the ingredients required. You could also create your own **shopping cards** for your favourite recipes.

To make it easier to use cooking appliances, a sheet with **step-by-step instructions** next to the appliance is simple and effective. If possible get instruction sheets laminated for protection.

Make meal preparation simpler

It takes a lot of mental energy to concentrate on the stove-top, the oven and the microwave all at the same time. So try cooking the meal by using just one appliance – the stove top, the oven, or the microwave.

Reduce the number of steps to prepare food by buying pre-cut fresh vegetables. Most supermarkets have pre-cut broccoli, pumpkin and lettuce in packets. Other **pre-prepared foods** can be purchased in convenient packets too.



A weekly or fortnightly **meal routine**, such as spaghetti on Mondays and lamb chop on Tuesdays, will help maintain a balanced diet through the week. It will also take the pressure off menu planning.

Find out if there are **home delivered meals** in your area for days when you don't feel like cooking. You might like to treat yourself to a home delivered lasagne or fish and chips once a week. Frozen meals from the supermarket are handy when you don't feel like cooking. If you aren't used to having frozen meals, or are not sure how to heat them, this may not be the answer.

Shopping

Some people always shop with a list, but others leave it to memory as they tour the supermarket shelves. If you have not used a list before, start the habit of creating and using **shopping lists** each time you shop.

A good place to keep the shopping list is in the same place as your desk diary and memory board (see [Communicating and Conversing](#)). As you run out of items or remember things you need, write them down on the list. Take the list with you when you go shopping.

If you have used **the Internet for buying things**, but haven't done grocery shopping this way, this might be a good time to start. You can save shopping lists and see what you bought last time. Both can help you remember what you need. Although there is a delivery fee, you are saving on transport and the worry of getting home with heavy bags.



Cleaning

Use the desk diary to record when you did each of the household chores and to remind you what still needs to be done (see [Communicating and Conversing](#)).

Develop a regular routine, such as cleaning the bathroom on Fridays, and washing up after eating, so that it becomes habitual. A checklist of weekly household tasks can also serve as a reminder.

Your local doctor can refer you to a range of services that can help you at home. These include [Home and Community Care Services](#) and specialist health teams that visit you at home. These types of services include help with household tasks, personal care, neighbour aid services, community transport, food services, home maintenance and aged care assessment teams (ACAT).



SAFETY & SECURITY



Feeling safe

Feeling safe at home is important at all times. It becomes especially important if you are worried about getting help if you have an accident or become unwell.

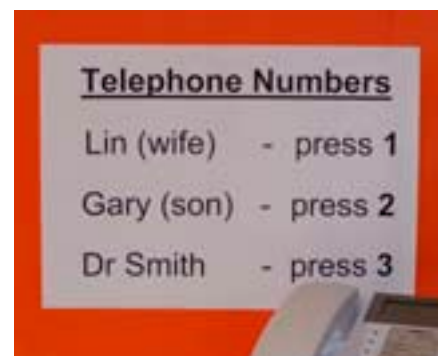
Emergencies

Emergency incidents often require quick thinking, but it might be difficult to act quickly and remember who to contact. Keep a reminder note next to the home telephone with the name and number of who to contact in an emergency. If your home phone has speed dial buttons, program your emergency contacts under these. This means only one button needs to be pressed in an emergency. See section on [Remembering telephone numbers](#) for more information.

Emergency call systems

Emergency Call systems allow you to call for assistance. Pressing a button on a pendant or wrist strap makes the call. There are many brands and systems available. Some call pre-programmed phone numbers of family or friends to alert them with a pre-recorded message. Others connect to a call centre which is staffed 24 hours a day. The **Vital Call Personal Response Service** has a two way intercom where you can speak to a person who will help. Pendants and wrist straps can be worn in the shower and the garden. This type of device may be helpful in early stages of dementia, but remembering to activate the transmitter may become more difficult.

Sensors that can monitor smoke, gas, flooding, intruders, and unlocked doors can be used in conjunction with some emergency call systems for home protection. Both **Tunstall Emergency Call Systems** and **Smart Link Personal Alarm System** have these options. Their call centre staff will call you or your family to clarify the problem and can contact the relevant emergency services to deal with the incidents. Although these centres will monitor other amenities, you will need a nominated person to organise the services required. For example to contact the gas company in the event of a gas leak.



Alarms

Smoke alarms are essential in any home, but it is important to replace the batteries each twelve months. In case you have difficulty remembering what to do if the alarm sounds, you can have your smoke alarm connected to a call centre. They will give advice and contact a nominated neighbour or relative to assist.



Locks and Doors

If a lock gets stuck and you are locked in a room, it can be very distressing if you are alone in the house. Remove all internal locks to prevent locking yourself in a room. If you must have a lock on a door, install one with a simple slide or turn action so it is easy to move and easy to remember how it operates.



The **Rescue Door System** is designed to rescue people from a locked room. When the door frame is pressed the door is released. Alternatively, install doors with special unlocking features or **hinges that lift off**. But remember both these products require another person to help you get out of the room if you are locked in.

Home automation technology enables you to control most electrical items in your home via voice control, remote controls, telephone or motion detection. The **Clipsal Minder Home Automation System** can be set to motion detection for home security, and programmed to set an alarm. For more information see the section on [Home Automation Systems](#).



TAKING TABLETS



Getting organised

It is easy to forget to take tablets or to take them twice, or even to take tablets at the wrong time of day.

Set up a system with your pharmacist. Discuss the supply of all prescriptions at one time, say, monthly. Write in your diary when to collect them or when you are likely to run out.

The pharmacist may also simplify the number and frequency of tablets.

If you are not sure what each of your tablets is for, ask your pharmacist and make a list. Your pharmacist can also check that your prescriptions, other tablets, and vitamin supplements are appropriate to take together. If medicine containers are hard to open, discuss this with the pharmacist.

This is a good time to involve a family member so they can understand the medications you are taking.



Taking the right tablets

One of the easiest ways of organising your medication is to have a week's supply delivered at the same time each week. The pharmacist puts the tablets into separate compartments in a **blister pack** for each day of the week. Each compartment is individually labelled with the name of the tablet, the day, and the time to take it. If you need reminding to take tablets, use this in conjunction with an electronic medication reminder.

The **Pil-Bob Blisterpack Opener** is a small round plastic device designed to make removing tablets easier. It tears the foil at the back of the blister pack and catches the pills as they fall out.



You can organise your own tablets with the **Weekly Tablet Container**, the **Mediset Never Forget Again Organiser** or the **Ezy-Dose One Day Pill Reminder**. These plastic containers store daily or weekly doses and have either lift up or sliding lids. Some have four compartments - morning, midday, evening and bedtime. Each day and segment is numbered and marked with high contrast writing; some have Braille.



By filling the compartment each day or week you can easily see if you have forgotten to take a dose. You might like to have someone else fill these containers for you. Be aware that some tablets should not be stored together. Your pharmacist can give advice on this.

Electronic Pill dispensers help you to remember both tablets and the time to take them. They contain compartments that can be set at a programmed time to alarm and open.



The **Pill Box Timer** is a round pillbox with two compartments for tablets, with a timer in the lid. It has three alarm times. The clear display automatically resets to the next medication time after each alarm. The two compartments cannot be opened until the set time but you will need to know which compartment of tablets to take at the specific time.

The **Careousel** is a computerised medical dispenser containing 28 compartments that can be programmed individually. At the set time an alarm signals and the cassette rotates to expose the correct medication through an opening in the lid. Reminder alarms continue to sound for one hour or until medication is taken. With 28 compartments you can set up a week's medication with up to four dose times a day.



Taking the tablets at the right time

Taking tablets at set meal times helps establish a routine if it suits the type of medication. If there is a change in routine or eating habits, or loss of appetite, this might not be a reliable system.

Electronic medication reminders are very helpful if you are confident that you know what tablets to take and when. Electronic medication reminders are set to sound when it is time to take the tablets. You might need some help to set it up in the first place.

Introducing an alarm system as a new gadget might take some getting used to. All alarm systems require the ability to associate the alarm sound with the need to take tablets. If you do not make the connection between the sound and the tablets, you will need someone to remind you to take your tablets.

The **Cadex Watch** is a water-resistant wristwatch designed as a medication reminder. It either vibrates or sounds an alarm when it is time to take tablets. The name of the tablets appears on the screen. It also shows the date and time in large numbers, and can store your name, doctor's name and contact details, blood type, and allergies.

The **Vigil-Aide Alarm** works by connecting it to a timer that plugs into a power point. The timer triggers the alarm, which continues to sound until reset. The alarm can be a siren or buzzing sound, a vibrating signal or a flashing light. The alarm does not switch off automatically so could be distressing and confusing if you forget how to switch it off. The Vigil-Aide also comes in a wristwatch style.

The **Smart Caller Blue Phone** is an emergency call system that also has a medication reminder facility and works in similar ways to other reminder systems.

You can program your **personal digital assistant** (PDA), pocket PC, mobile phone or pager to send a medication reminder message to remind you of which tablet to take. You can also store special instructions, such as, "Fosamax: do not take with orange juice". Look for a specific phone or PDA with special software that includes spoken and picture cues.



GETTING TO PLACES



Using public transport

If you have early stage dementia and are still driving, you need to find other ways of getting about once you are unable to drive.

Find out what **public transport services** are available in your area. Get timetables of services, find out where bus stops, train stations and taxi ranks are and start using public transport regularly. Being able to get out and about to social activities and shopping is very important for your general health.

Finding a destination

Going to familiar places will probably not be a problem. But going to new places might be, so you will need to plan your route. If you are good at reading maps, you may find a road map useful for travelling on foot, bus, train or car. If maps aren't helpful for you, written instructions might be better. The "www.whereis.com.au" website provides both a map of the location and written instructions on how to get from one address to another.

Most state transport authorities offer a **trip planner** on their website to help organise your trip by public transport. Trip planners automatically work out the simplest route complete with bus numbers and train times.

Finding your way around

Take the same route to all the places you visit regularly and if being driven by someone else, ask them to take you on the same route that you take, whether by foot or bus. By making the route a habit, it will help you remember for longer.



Using a standard map can be difficult when you don't know where you are in the first place. If you are familiar with a GPS (**Global Positioning System**) device, continue to use it. Alternatively, if you have a mobile phone, you can call a friend for help to get home.

The **Ikids mobile phone** has a GPS satellite receiver, which tracks your location. If the phone is taken out of a designated area, a text message is sent to a pre-arranged person. Four pre-programmed numbers can be installed for fast dialling. Although originally designed for children, this simple design may be an effective way of making sure you get home safely.

Identification cards and bracelets can help other people get you home safely if you lose your way. Alzheimer's Australia has a bracelet that carries a personal identification code. The police use a database which lists individuals' personal contact details. Anyone offering help can look at the bracelet, telephone the police and quote the personal code. The police then make arrangements for you to return home safely.

For details of these programs in your state, contact the **National Dementia Help line on 1800 100 500** or www.alzheimers.org.au



State and Territory website addresses for transport information

STATE	PHONE	WEBSITE
New South Wales	13 15 00	www.131500.com.au
Australian Capital Territory	13 17 10	www.action.act.gov.au
Victoria	13 16 38	www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au
Queensland	13 12 30	www.translink.com.au
Tasmania	13 22 01	www.metrotas.com.au
South Australia	1800 182 160	www.adelaidemetro.com.au
Western Australia	13 62 13	www.transperth.wa.gov.au
Northern Territory	08 8924 7666	www.nt.gov.au/publictransport

For maps and written directions between one address and another, visit the website at www.whereis.com.au

PRODUCT LISTING

To find any of the items listed below, click on the heading above it. This will take you to the relevant section of the handbook.

■ **Around the House**

- Creating routines
- Automating things
- Simple instructions
- Cut-off switches
- Pictures on doors
- Signs on cupboards
- Minimise mail
- Sensor lights
- Automatic timers
- Timer clocks
- Computer software
- Home automation system

■ **Communicating and Conversing**

- Message centre
- Whiteboard or corkboard
- Post-it Notes®,
- Desk Diary
- Telephone index book
- Smart Caller Blue Phone
- Speed dial, auto dial
- Cordless phones
- Mobile phones
- Vital Call Mobile Companion
- Video phones
- Email
- Medic-Alert
- Alzheimer Australia identification card

■ **Money Management**

- Enduring Power of Attorney
- Year Planner
- Direct Debit
- Credit card
- Debit card
- Wallets and purses

See page 7

See page 10

See page 14

■ **Remembering Things**

Newspaper
Calendar clocks
Cable TV
Radio alarm clock
Orientation boards
Diary
Voice recording alarm clocks
Electronic diaries
Palm Pilot
PicFolio Minutes Album
Wireless key finder
Drawer dividers
Clear plastic food storage containers
Single master key
Storakey
Keypad door lock
Sensor taps
Spring-loaded taps
Magiplug
Electric and gas stove isolation system
Ultra Safety Auto Cut-Out Iron
Power-point timers
Count down timers
Electronic timers
Power 5 Box
Local services

See page 16

■ **Cooking, Shopping and Cleaning**

Recipe book
Easy Cook Book
Shopping cards
Appliance instructions
Pre-prepared foods
Meal routine
Home delivered meals
Shopping lists
Internet shopping
Home and Community Care Services

See page 21

■ **Safety and Security**

Door hinges that lift off
Emergency Call Systems
Vital Call Personal Response Service
Sensors
Smart Link Personal Alarm System
Rescue Door System
Tunstall Emergency Call Systems
Smoke alarms
Home automation technology
Clipsal Minder Home Automation System

See page 24

■ **Taking Tablets**

Blister pack
Pil-Bob Blisterpack Opener
Weekly Tablet Container
Never Forget Again Organiser
Ezy-Dose Weekly Pill Reminder
Electronic medication reminders
Pill Box Timer
Cadex Watch
Vigil-Aide Alarm
Smart Caller Blue Phone
Personal digital assistant
Careousel

See page 26

■ **Getting to Places**

“Where is?” website
Public transport services
Trip planner
Global Positioning System
Ikids mobile phone
Identification cards and bracelets
Safely Home Bracelet

See page 29

INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTRES IN AUSTRALIA

National Contact Number

Phone: 1300 885 886

National Website

www.ilcaustralia.org

Australian Capital Territory

24 Parkinson St, Weston ACT 2611

Email: ilcact@act.gov.au

Phone: 02 6205 1900

Fax: 02 6205 1906

New South Wales

No1 Fennell Street, Parramatta NSW 2150

Email: help@ilcnsw.asn.au Website: www.ilcnsw.asn.au

Phone: 02 9890 0940

Fax: 02 9890 0966

LifeTec Queensland

Reading Newmarket, Corner Newmarket Rd & Enoggera Rd

PO Box 3241, Newmarket QLD 4051

Email: mail@lifetec.org.au Website: www.lifetec.org.au

Phone: 07 3552 9000

Fax: 07 3552 9088

South Australia

11 Blacks Road, Gilles Plains SA 5086

Email: ilcsa@ilc.asn.au Website: www.ilc.asn.au

Phone: 08 8266 5260

Fax: 08 8266 5263

Tasmania

46 Canning Street, Launceston TAS 7250

Email: ilc@ilctas.asn.au Website: www.ilctas.asn.au

Phone: 03 6334 5899

Fax: 03 6334 0045

Victoria

PO Box 1101, Altona Gate VIC 3025

705 Geelong Rd, Brooklyn VIC 3025

Email: ilc@yooralla.com.au Website: deis.vic.gov.au

Phone: 03 9362 6111

Fax: 03 9314 9825

Western Australia

The Niche, Suite A, 11 Aberdare Rd, Nedlands WA 6009

Email: enquiries@ilc.com.au Website: www.ilc.com.au

Phone: 08 9381 0600

Fax: 08 9381 0611

ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA

National Dementia Helpline

Interpreter Service

National website

National Office

Alzheimer's Australia, PO Box 4019, Hawker ACT 2614

Australian Capital Territory

159 Maribynong Avenue, Kaleen ACT 2617

E-mail: admin@alzheimersact.asn.au

New South Wales

Cnr Cox's and Norton Roads, North Ryde NSW 2113

E-mail: admin@alznsw.asn.au

Northern Territory

Nightcliff Community Ctr, Suite 3/18 Bauhinia St, Nightcliff NT 0810

E-mail: admin@alzheimersnt.org.au

Queensland

Unit 2, 9 Hubert St, Woolloongabba QLD 4102

E-mail: info@alzqld.asn.au

South Australia

27 Conyngham Street, Glenside SA 5065

E-mail: alzsa@alzheimerssa.asn.au

Tasmania

Ground floor, 119 Macquarie Street, Hobart TAS 7000

Victoria

98 - 104 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn VIC 3122

E-mail: alz@alzvict.asn.au

Western Australia

Mary Chester Centre, 9 Bedbrook Place, Shenton Park WA 6008

E-mail: alzwa@alzheimers.asn.au

1800 100 500

131 450

www.alzheimers.org.au

Phone: 02 6254 4233

Phone: 02 6255 0722

Fax: 02 6255 0499

Phone: 02 9805 0100

Fax: 02 9805 1665

Phone: 08 8948 5228

Fax: 08 8948 5229

Phone: 07 3895 8200

Fax: 07 3895 8266

Phone: 08 8372 2100

Fax: 08 8338 3390

Phone: 03 6224 3077

Fax: 03 6224 1244

Phone: 03 9815 7800

Fax: 03 9815 7801

Phone: 08 9388 2800

Fax: 08 9388 2739



INDEPENDENT LIVING
CENTRE NSW

Helpful Handbook for Memory Loss

FOR MORE INFORMATION - CALL 1300 885 886



An Australian Government Initiative

HELPING AUSTRALIANS WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR CARERS