



**Aids for people
with dementia**



Aids for people with dementia





Here you can read about some of the aids available for people with dementia.

When someone is struck by a dementia condition, everyday tasks may become difficult overnight. Some people with dementia may forget to turn off the iron, while others may not find their way home, even though they have taken the same route every day for years.

Below you can find examples of aids that could help make everyday life easier and safer for people with dementia and their relatives. There are other kinds of aids that can train and support memory or help decode numbers and letters.

Switches, alarms and timers

Switches and alarms can be placed on all electrical appliances such as the cooker and iron, so you avoid the risk of fires. Many people with dementia are easily interrupted in what they are doing or simply forget to turn off the cooker after use. Unfortunately, a soldering iron, curling iron or toaster can relatively easily begin a fire if left on. There are different types, so ask for advice or search for more information on the internet. In some cases it might be best to use an alarm that indicates the appliance is still switched on. In other cases, it is easiest to use a switch or timer that automatically turns off appliances after a while.

Smoke detectors

A smoke detector can be a life saver if the worst happens. Choose a model that has an alarm with both light and sound, because sound alone is not always enough – especially if the person with dementia also has impaired hearing.

Electric toothbrush and pill alarms

If the dementia disorder affects movement, an electric toothbrush may make it easier to take care of dental hygiene. An electric toothbrush requires less motor function than an ordinary toothbrush and can better brush the whole mouth.

Pill alarms that ring when it is time to take medication are also available at the pharmacy or online. Using a pill alarm is a particularly good idea if the person with dementia takes several kinds of medication during the day, because it may be difficult or even impossible for them to remember whether they took their morning pills.

Telephones with large displays

You can buy telephones that are easy to dial from and have encoded numbers. This means that the person with dementia does not need to remember the numbers of family, friends and other important contacts such as medical or other emergency services.

There are also telephone models where you ring to people by pressing a photo of them. If the dementia disorder has influenced reading and the understanding of numbers and letters, this type of telephone allows the person to remain in touch with friends and family.

ID card or ID bracelet

ID cards are a card or bracelet, where you write the wearer's name, the contact person's name and phone number, and that the wearer has a dementia disorder. ID cards are particularly useful if the person with

dementia cannot explain where they live. With the address on the card or armband, it is easier for others to follow the person quickly and safely home.

There are ID bracelets made of plastic similar to those you get when you are admitted to hospital. You can also get a smarter version by visiting the jewellers and having a nice bracelet made with the information instead. The ID card can simply be a handwritten piece of paper placed in a wallet, purse or pocket. If you can get the homemade ID card laminated then it will last longer and withstand rain. Some libraries and stationary stores offer laminating services.

Photo manuals

Some people with dementia have difficulty reading and decoding numbers and letters. It may therefore be a good idea to use pictures to describe how to use the washing machine, microwave or other devices. It is easy to make instructions with photos on a computer, or you can paste printed images onto a piece of paper.

You could take photos of an open washing machine with towels in it and take photos of how the settings look when the washing machine is set for a hot cycle. Similarly, you could take photos of how the microwave buttons or the display should look if you want to heat the leftovers from dinner. In the photo manual for the microwave, you could also have photos of metal utensils with a big red cross over them, so that the person with dementia does not accidentally ruin the microwave or start a fire by trying to warm up some leftovers in a metal bowl.

Dementia teddy bears

Many people with dementia are lonely. At the same time, some people with the final stages of the dementia may also feel uncomfortable in the company of other people. In both cases, a dementia teddy bear may help.

Dementia teddy bears are soft and cuddly teddy bears that look gentle and nice. Choose a teddy bear or doll with large, gentle eyes and one that weighs a bit. This may give the person with dementia the feeling of having a real animal in their arms.

Pictures help overview and memory

Many people with dementia quickly feel overwhelmed and confused. If they have difficulty finding things in drawers or cupboards in the kitchen, pictures or drawings on the outside of the cupboard may be helpful. A picture of a cup or a plate on the outside of the cupboard may help the person find what they are looking for – without having to open every cupboard in the kitchen. In the same way, you could paste pictures or drawings onto the wardrobe, so it is easier for the person to find trousers and socks. Hang up photos of keys, a wallet or purse, jacket, location device and perhaps a telephone by the front door.

Dementia watch

A dementia watch is a watch that can help keep track of time and act as a calendar. An alarm can be set to go off when it is time to take medication or to leave for an appointment.

The watch also helps to keep track of the day so time does not simply disappear. Depending on the type of dementia watch you choose, it could be configured to say “good morning” at 8:00 and “good evening” at 20:00, or simply to ring with different alarms during the day.

Dementia watches that can be worn as wristwatches will also include tracking/GPS.

Photo collage

An photo album is a good idea – if you remember to look at it. Photos and names of friends and family hung up on the wall are seen more often and can be a welcome help to the person with dementia when they have visitors and cannot remember someone's name.

At the same time, it is both nice and comforting to look at people you care about.

You can hang up the pictures precisely as you wish, so they match your daily life and décor. Some prefer to have one large photo collage on one of the walls. Others hang the pictures up around the home or together on the wall opposite the person with dementia's usual chair at the dining table, so they can take a quick peek during the family dinner.

An alternative to traditional framed photos is to have a photo album on a mobile phone, so the person with dementia can have portraits of his or her loved ones along with their names.

Location systems

If the person with dementia wanders and becomes lost, a location system may be a lifesaver – particularly in the cold winter months.

According to the National Knowledge Centre for Dementia, just over 50% of all people with dementia in Denmark wander at some point during their illness. Some people wander several times. This means that every year there are more than 1,500 people with dementia in Denmark who wander from their homes. Between 10 and 15 people per year are not found in time and many more are seriously injured.

The high risk of the person with dementia wandering is very concerning for their relatives. The person with dementia may also feel limited and imprisoned at home because he or she feels insecure about leaving the home. This concern and worry can have a negative effect on social life and the quality of life of both the person with dementia and the relatives.

A good location system may give the person with dementia autonomy and the opportunity to visit friends and go to activities without having to worry – or worrying his or her relatives. This gives relatives the peace of mind to enjoy their own interests and networks. At the same time, the person with dementia does not have the unpleasant feeling of being a burden or strain on their relatives.

There are many different kinds of location system, each with their own pros and cons. The Otiom location system has been developed in collaboration with experts, dementia associations and relatives. It can therefore be fully adapted to the needs of people with dementia and their relatives. For example, you choose the exact level of safety zone you need and change to a new one when your needs change.

