



# Home Safety for Alzheimer's Disease

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

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## Alzheimer's Disease and Home Safety

As Alzheimer's disease progresses, you may begin to have issues understanding traffic signals and road signs. Giving up driving can be difficult and having someone to drive you to work, back home, and to run errands can feel like you're burdening others. It's important not to think of it this way. By staying off the road, you are saving lives. Also, do not think about this as having someone take you to work and home; in reality, you're just carpooling, which lots of people do anyway to help save the environment or to reduce the cost of gas overall. You may have to run errands with a loved one, but this is for the best anyway. You'll be able to get help to remember what you needed. It also doesn't have to be the same person all the time. Use anyone within your support network. This is a good way to spend time with people who you may have been too busy to interact with on a regular basis.

# Alzheimer's Disease (AD) & Home Safety

## >> Finding Support and Innovative Solutions

**AD symptom – Agnosia:**  
**Inability to Recognize the Purpose of Objects**  
 "It is as if I have been taken to another world where nothing makes sense. Everything looks foreign. I know things should make sense – but they don't. I stare at items in the bathroom and have moments where I don't know what to do."  
 - Person with AD

**The Safety Challenge:** Changes in the parietal lobe of the brain can cause safety issues such as:

- Eating/drinking on non-food items
- Fire hazards
- Inhaling hazardous materials or chemicals
- Misunderstanding traffic signals and road signs

**The Parietal Lobe** of the brain controls our ability to process and understand the purpose of physical objects and cues.

**Home Safety Solutions**  
 Visit: [1.usa.gov/16oT03q](http://1.usa.gov/16oT03q) to find a home safety checklist that you can use to ensure that each room of your home is safe.

**AD symptom – Wandering:**  
**A Search for Something Familiar**  
 "These things can happen at any given time. All it takes is a caregiver who's working really hard, to turn around for a second and the person can wander."  
 - Beth Kallinger  
 Vice President of Consultant Services  
 Alzheimer's Association

**The Safety Challenge:** Changes in the prefrontal cortex, frontal lobe and hippocampus in the brain can cause wandering – a common, life threatening symptom.

**The Prefrontal Cortex** of the brain controls our orientation to person, place and time.  
**The Frontal Lobe** controls movement. Alzheimer's disease can damage brain cells in these areas, causing a person to become disoriented. This is a common trigger for wandering.  
**The Hippocampus** controls our short-term memory and is often the first part of the brain impacted by Alzheimer's disease.

**Home Safety Solutions**  
 Visit: [bit.ly/19vEMbV](http://bit.ly/19vEMbV) and [bit.ly/18xJf0l](http://bit.ly/18xJf0l) to enroll in programs that help to locate a person with AD who has wandered.

**AD symptom – Injury due to falling:**  
**Depth Perception, Balance & Coordination**  
 "Ever since my mother fell, I cannot get the sight and sound out of my head. I feel like I can't turn my attention away or sleep for a second. Of course, this is impossible... but I try anyway."  
 - Family caregiver

**The Safety Challenge:** Changes in the frontal lobe, occipital lobe and cerebellum in the brain can impact vision, depth perception and motor coordination.

**The Frontal Lobe & Cerebellum** control our movement, balance and coordination.  
**The Occipital Lobe** controls our vision and depth perception. When damage occurs in this area, a person with Alzheimer's can become a fall risk.

**Home Safety Solutions**  
 Visit the following links to learn more about reducing the risk of falling:  
 • [bit.ly/14NSqhl](http://bit.ly/14NSqhl) • [1.usa.gov/1daFEKV](http://1.usa.gov/1daFEKV) • [bit.ly/1daFGCK](http://bit.ly/1daFGCK)

**AD symptom – Driving issues:**  
**Vision, Judgement & Reflexes**  
 "It was very difficult giving up things such as a car when I'm still working... without my wife taking me to work in the morning and a driver taking me home in the afternoon, I would be pretty much stuck in the house every day."  
 - Person with AD  
 National Alzheimer's Disease  
 Alzheimer's Association Town Hall Meeting

**The Safety Challenge:** Changes in the prefrontal cortex, frontal lobe, parietal lobe and temporal lobes of the brain can cause impaired depth perception, judgment, reflexes and insight into driving challenges.

**Successful driving involves all lobes of the brain.** The Prefrontal Cortex in the brain controls our executive function and judgement. The Frontal Lobe controls our movement and reflexes. The Parietal and Temporal Lobes control our ability to read and understand traffic signals and signs.

**Home Safety Solutions**  
 Visit: [bit.ly/17Q2fay](http://bit.ly/17Q2fay) for a great guide to understanding and managing driving issues.

## Your Home Safety Care Team

The good news is that there are healthcare providers who are experts in creating a safe home setting for people living with AD.

Key members of your care team should include an occupational therapist, physical therapist, geriatric care manager, family doctor/nurse practitioner, in-home care, adult day care, and a visiting nurse.

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