



**Alzheimer
Scotland**
Action on Dementia



Our “Top Tips” for living well with dementia



The Scottish Dementia Working Group (SDWG)

The Scottish Dementia Working Group (SDWG) is a national, member led campaigning and awareness raising group for people living with a diagnosis of dementia in Scotland. Founded in 2001, the group has been at the forefront of campaigning for improved dementia support and services ever since, raising awareness to help tackle stigma, working with decision makers to ensure that people living with dementia have a voice to influence policy and practice, and working as partners in dementia research.

The Scottish Dementia Working Group is part of Alzheimer Scotland's Active Voice network along with the National Dementia Carers Action Network (NDCAN). Find out more at www.alzscot.org/active-voice

Active Voice

Enabling and promoting the diverse voices of people with dementia and carers to campaign for, promote and uphold rights and drive change



Top Tips for living well with dementia

We're sharing tips that have proven effective for us and fellow individuals living with dementia. We recognise that everyone is unique, and our goal is to provide strategies that resonate with you. It's about discovering what works best for your specific situation. While there's no one-size-fits-all solution, we encourage you to explore and find what suits you best.

We understand that some people embrace technology, while others prefer alternative approaches. That's why we've included sections covering both perspectives. Keep doing the things you love and the things that matter to you. As Stuart from the Scottish Dementia Working Group says:

"My life has changed, but it's not over."

We have organised the booklet into the following sections:

Around the home	4
At home in the kitchen	5
Reminders around the home	6
Making changes to your home	8
Home safety and security	9
Technology	10
Managing medication	11
Travel tips	12
Engaging with companies and service providers	14
Where to get support when you need it	15



Around the home

Here are some practical tips for creating a safer and more organised home environment.

Sensor light switches:

Install **sensor-activated light switches** for example on stairs and the route to the toilet. Set the duration to allow enough time to reach the bathroom and return to bed safely. An alternative to these are battery motion activated lights which can be placed beside or under the bed to light the floor.

Wardrobe and cupboard lights:

Place **sensor lights** inside wardrobes and cupboards. This makes it easier to find items without fumbling in the dark.

Organise key storage:

Have a specific spot for keys, such as a **bowl or side drawer**. You may wish to consider a key safe on the outside of your property.

Colour-code keys to match their corresponding locks, by adding matching coloured sticky dots to both key and lock.

Bells on keys:

Attach small bells to your keys. The jingling sound helps you find them within bags or pockets.

Declutter:

Keep your living spaces tidy and **avoid excessive clutter**.

Pendant or falls sensor:

Wear a **pendant or falls sensor** that alerts someone if you experience a fall. These devices provide an added layer of safety.

If you have a smartwatch, check if it has a built-in **falls sensor**. Some models can detect falls and notify emergency contacts.



Adapting your home environment to your specific needs can significantly enhance safety and comfort.

At home in the kitchen



Here are some practical tips for managing daily tasks in the kitchen.

Fridge as a central point:

Use the fridge as a central location for reminders. Attach **fridge magnets** to leave notes or messages for yourself or others.

Non-slip mats:

Place **non-slip mats** on worktops to prevent accidents.

Timer and automatic cut-offs:

Set a timer when you start a task to remind you to check on it.

Carry a **portable timer** to different rooms. Use it to remind you to check food or turn off appliances.

Set a timer to remind you to turn off the oven or iron.

Consider using **automatic cut offs** for appliances like the iron which will ensure your safety by turning off the appliance after a set time. Some irons will have this safety feature already built in.

Visual cues and reminders:

Attach **labels** on kitchen cabinets to remind you of what's inside.

Choose **transparent kitchen appliances** (like kettles or toasters) so you can easily see when they're ready.

Place a note near to the cooker with instructions such as: "Do not answer the door or phone when you are cooking".



These strategies can help create a safer and more organised kitchen environment.



Reminders around the home

Here are some practical tips for using reminders effectively around the home:

Sticking to a **routine** creates new habits.

Labels and whiteboards:

Use **labels** to mark drawers, cupboards, or containers. Clear labels help you remember what's inside.

Install a **whiteboard** in a central area. Write down reminders, to-do lists, or upcoming events.

Notice boards and magnetic boards:

Set up a **notice board** or a **magnetic board** and use it to attach reminders, notes, appointment cards and important papers.

Recorded messages:

Reminders using your phone or Alexa etc. Set a reminder on your phone, or by asking Alexa or another voice assistant. These can serve as reminders for tasks or appointments.

Calendars and diaries:

Use **calendars** with large boxes for each day. Record appointments, birthdays, and other important dates.

Choose a **diary** with a day per page.

Keep a **diary** in a place where family members are aware of.

Enter recurring events into calendars and diaries.

There are electronic apps such as TimeTree which allow you to share your electronic calendar, events and tasks with chosen family or friends.

Visual appeal:

Make printed reminders interesting to look at. Use **labels** or add photographs to catch your attention.

Reminders around the home



Checklist at the front door:

Keep a checklist near the front door. Before leaving, ask yourself:

- Have you turned off the gas?
- Are electrical appliances switched off?
- Do you have your keys, purse, or wallet?
- Is the back door locked?
- Are the windows shut?
- Remember to lock the front door.



Personalised reminders can make daily life easier and help you stay on top of tasks.



Making changes to your home

Here are some practical tips for upgrading or making changes to your home, with a focus on safety and convenience:

Fridge switch placement:

To prevent accidental switching off of the fridge, consider placing the switches **inside cupboards**. This way, they stay accessible but less prone to unintentional adjustments.

Beeping fridge alert:

Invest in a **fridge that beeps** when the door is left open. This feature helps prevent food spoilage and energy wastage.

Gas to electric transition:

Consider switching from gas to electric appliances. Electric appliances often have safety features and are easier to control.

For cooking, an electric stove or induction hob can be safer due to precise temperature control and automatic shutoff features.

Individual taps for hot and cold water:

Replace **mixer taps** with **individual taps** that clearly indicate hot and cold water. This makes it easier to adjust the water temperature and reduces the risk of scalding.

Light bulbs

You may wish to include the use of smart light bulbs.



These upgrades can enhance safety, convenience, and overall comfort in your home.

Home safety and security



Here are some tips for home safety and security.

No Cold Callers sticker:

Place a visible 'No Cold Callers' sticker on your front door. This helps deter unsolicited salespeople and potential scammers.

Consider an alarm system:

Installing a home alarm system can significantly enhance security. Even a **dummy alarm box** can act as a deterrent.

Smart doorbells (e.g. EUFY, Ring):

These allow you to see and communicate with visitors remotely, enhancing both convenience and security.

**You may wish to consider placing a note on the inside of your door:
Are you expecting someone?**

Cybercrime awareness:

Educate yourself about **cybercrime** and common scams. Visit the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) website for helpful information www.ncsc.gov.uk. Trading Standards Scotland also provides valuable information www.tsscot.co.uk

Front door sensor:

Install a sensor for your front door. This can both improve security and alert you to any unauthorised entry.

Smoking safety:

If you smoke, follow a routine. Always place water in the ashtray to ensure cigarettes are fully extinguished. Instead of emptying it into the bin, put it outside to prevent fire hazards.



A combination of preventive measures and awareness can significantly improve your home's safety and security.



Technology

Whilst we understand that not everyone is into using technology, there are some of us within the Scottish Dementia Working Group who have found it useful. In this section we have shared some of our strategies.

ADAM (About Dementia and Me) is a website that can find the most helpful technology for you. Have a browse or take the helpful matching questionnaire at www.meetadam.co.uk

Screen contrast:

Adjust your screen contrast to suit your comfort. Sometimes an off-white background feels more pleasant than a glaring white one.

Phone reminders:

Use your phone's reminder feature. When you receive an invite via phone or email, accepting it automatically adds it to your calendar.

Voice assistants (e.g. Alexa, Siri, Echo):

Smart assistants can be incredibly helpful. Use them for reminders, medication prompts, managing calendar items and listening to music.

Find my keys or item apps and tracker (e.g. Find my phone app, Tile tracker)

Use one of these to find your keys, wallet or phone. They are handy tools for finding misplaced items.

GPS tracker:

Consider using a GPS tracker or locator. If you get lost, it can help pinpoint your location. You can also choose to set alerts when particular areas are entered or left (sometimes called geofencing).

Subscription awareness:

Be cautious with technology subscriptions. Check if there are free or lower-cost alternatives before committing to paid services.



Technology can enhance our lives, but staying informed and making informed choices is essential.

Managing medication



Here are some tips for managing medication.

Pharmacy delivery service: Consider using a local pharmacy's delivery service. They can arrange to deliver your medication directly to your home in **blister packs**.

Dosette boxes: Dosette boxes are valuable tools to help you keep track of your medication. These boxes come in different variations, depending on your specific needs. Some dosette boxes have an **alarm** to remind you when it's time to take your medication.

Phone reminders: Use your phone's reminder for medication prompts. Many phones have the ability to store basic medical information (on the same screen as on/off).

Voice assistants (e.g. Alexa, Siri, Echo): These smart assistants can be incredibly helpful. Use them for reminders including medication prompts.

When travelling, medication must be in its original packaging and correctly labelled. Be aware of any restrictions on specific medicines in the country you are visiting.

Carry an extra amount of your prescribed medication on you: When you're away from home for an extended period, it's a good idea to carry extra medication with you. This ensures that you're prepared even if unexpected delays occur.

Emergency medication: If you realise that you've forgotten your medication while away from home, local pharmacies can often assist. They can contact your GP and provide **emergency medication**.



Ask your GP's surgery to print off a list of your medication in case of emergency when travelling.



Travel tips

Here are some helpful travel tips.

Be prepared for holidays:

Yes, you can still enjoy holidays. Remember to take necessary precautions and plan ahead.

Essential items to carry:

- **Lanyard:** Wear a lanyard with important information, such as emergency contacts and any medical conditions.
 - **Emergency contact details:** Keep a list of emergency contacts readily accessible.
 - **Medication list:** Carry a list of your medications, including dosages and schedules.
 - **Dementia card:** Consider carrying a dementia card that explains your condition to others.
-

Travel assistance at airports and train stations:

Take advantage of travel assistance services. They can provide support through security or guide you through the entire airport or train station journey.

Travel insurance:

Many travel insurance companies now cover people living with dementia. Ensure you have the right coverage before your trip.

Using your **mobile phone:** Set up mobile phone coverage for use abroad before you travel. This allows you to use your data and phone allowances for a set cost.

Consider using a GPS tracker or set up geofencing to ensure safety during travel.

Money cards:

You might want to use a money card such as Monza, Starling or Chase. These cards can be topped up and controlled easily with notifications received after each spend.

Travel tips



Inform the DVLA:

If you've been diagnosed with dementia, it's essential to inform the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) about your condition.

Using public transport: buses, trains and taxis:

Carry a card in your wallet or purse with details of your final destination. This helps when purchasing tickets.

Keep some **emergency change** handy for unexpected public transport needs.

Keep a note of your home address and frequently visited places with your bus pass.



Getting a diagnosis of dementia isn't a reason to stop travelling. You can still enjoy holidays and getting out and about.



Engaging with companies and service providers

Here are some tips to get the best from organisations if you have dementia:

Be open about your condition:

Don't hesitate to inform the appropriate people that you have dementia. Being open about it allows organisations to understand your needs better.

Priority or vulnerable lists:

Many organisations keep either a **priority list** or a **vulnerable list**. By disclosing your condition, you can access support tailored to your requirements.

Notify organisations:

Let relevant organisations (such as utility providers) know about your dementia. They can make necessary provisions to help you.

Specific considerations:

Bins: If you struggle with managing bins, consider asking the local council to collect them directly from your house.

Electric and gas providers: Keep them informed about your situation. They may offer additional support or flexible payment options.

Council services: Reach out to your local council for any assistance you might need.

Give yourself time:

If you forget your PIN number at a garage or bank, don't panic. Give yourself the space to remember it. People are generally understanding and patient.



Remember that organisations are often willing to accommodate your needs, so don't hesitate to communicate openly with them.

Where to get support when you need it



Alzheimer Scotland's 24 hour Freephone Dementia Helpline:
0808 808 3000 or email **helpline@alzscot.org**

Alzheimer Scotland's National Dementia Advisory Service:
Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm **0300 373 5774**
(charged at local call rate).
Email: **NDAS@alzscot.org**

Alzheimer Scotland website **www.alzscot.org**

ADAM (About Dementia And Me) – find the technology that works
for you. **www.meetadam.co.uk**

Who are Allied Health Professionals and how can they help me?

Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) are a group of various health professionals who can support you if you have dementia. They are often referred to as AHPs and are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

There are several different kinds of AHPs. The AHPs you are most likely to see in a community setting include art therapy, dietitians, music therapy, occupational therapy, paramedics, podiatry, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy. It is best to make early contact with an AHP if you are worried about your memory or if you or someone in your family has recently been diagnosed with dementia. That way you can get the information, advice and treatment that is right for you and your family as quickly as possible.

Allied Health Professionals have created a suite of information resources for people with dementia and those who support them and you can find all the resources here at **www.alzscot.org/ahpresources** and at **www.cpcs.online**.



Notes

A large, empty rectangular area with rounded corners, intended for writing notes.

Notes





Notes

A large, empty rectangular area with rounded corners, intended for taking notes. It is bounded by a thin purple line.

Acknowledgements

This is the second edition (2024) of Our 'Top Tips for living well with dementia' booklet from the Scottish Dementia Working Group.

Thanks to those involved in this and the original work which this builds on.

Editors of the 2024 edition:

Fran Hamilton (Project Lead, Occupational Therapist) and Elaine Hunter (National Allied Health Professions Consultant, Alzheimer Scotland).



www.alzscot.org/sdwg

X: @sdwg



**Alzheimer
Scotland**
Action on Dementia

www.alzscot.org

X: @alzscot

The Scottish Dementia Working Group, May 2024