

# Health and safety for carers

## THE ENVIRONMENT AND DEMENTIA

The home is the workplace of carers and service providers of people with dementia. This Help Sheet discusses some of the health and safety issues that arise when the home is the workplace of carers and service providers.

Carers need to have a safe environment in which to work. They must also be aware that health and safety is important for any service provider working in the home. Problems that sometimes arise from working in an unsafe environment include fatigue, stress, isolation, ill health and back injury.

### Checklist

This checklist may help to identify any hazards in the home for carers and service providers:

#### Sleep

- Is it possible to get sufficient uninterrupted sleep to be able to carry out caring tasks safely?

#### Stress

- Does the carer get a regular break (respite) from caring?
- Has the carer had access to adequate information about dementia?
- Has the carer had the opportunity to discuss their grief with a counsellor or friend?

#### Medical

- Does the person with dementia have a doctor who is experienced in the area of dementia?

#### Fire

- Is the carer or service provider at risk of danger resulting from the actions of a person with dementia, such as leaving on stoves, heaters or appliances, or from smoking?

#### Personal care

- Does the person with dementia have to be lifted or transferred?
- How many people are required?
- Is equipment needed and available?
- Has the carer or service provider received training in safe manual handling techniques?
- Are modifications required to the toilet or shower because the rooms are too confined or awkward, requiring the carer to stoop, twist or reach?
- Is the person with dementia incontinent?
- Are incontinence aids available?
- Has the carer received advice from a continence adviser?
- Is there a laundry service available to assist with the heavy washing load?

#### Behaviour problems

- Is the carer or service provider at risk of assault or considerable stress from the person with dementia because of challenging behaviours?
- Has the carer received advice from a specialist about the management of challenging behaviours?

#### What to try

##### Information and counselling

Contact Alzheimer's Australia for information and counselling.

Apply for a Carer Information Kit which is available free to carers from Carers Australia. It has a range of practical

