

The laundry

THE ENVIRONMENT AND DEMENTIA

This Help Sheet suggests some ways to make the laundry as useful and safe as possible for a person with dementia, their family and carers. Not all suggestions will suit all people or situations, but some people may find a solution to a particular problem they are experiencing in the laundry.

If modifying the laundry becomes necessary, try to keep the room as familiar as possible. Don't unnecessarily rearrange cupboards, bench tops or change décor. The whole aim is to simplify the laundry so that the person with dementia can maintain their skills and participation for as long as possible and use the laundry safely.

Regularly check to see if the following present a barrier to independence or safety in the laundry:

- Taps, sink
- Cupboards and the way they are organised
- Slippery floors, loose floor coverings or mats
- Clutter on bench tops
- Lighting and glare
- Power points and electrical leads
- Hazardous substances

Hazardous substances

Use the following checklist to check for any hazardous materials that could cause harm:

- Household cleaning products, such as washing up detergent, laundry detergent and bleach
- Disinfectants
- Kerosene

- Insecticides, sprays, pest baits and related products
- Paints, varnish, paint solvents and putty
- Glues, insect repellents, mosquito coils
- Garden sprays
- Dry cleaning fluids
- Medicines and products for pets

These substances need to be locked away when the person with dementia is no longer able to read, recognise objects or distinguish such products from food and drink. Use latches or key locks as locks that are very visible may offend the person's dignity or cause frustration.

Keep emergency numbers near the telephone, including the Poisons Information phone number.

What to try

Cupboards

Label cupboards if it helps the person to find and replace things. Gradually clear out the cupboards and reduce the number of each type of item, keeping just a few of the most commonly used things. If the person with dementia can no longer use the cupboards, try putting the most commonly used items on the bench or an open shelf, or even take the doors off a couple of cupboards to create open shelving for better visibility and identification.

