



ALZHEIMER'S FOUNDATION OF AMERICA



THE APARTMENT

A Guide to Creating a Dementia-Friendly Home



The Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) is a national nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to provide support, services and education to individuals, families and caregivers affected by Alzheimer's disease and related dementias nationwide, and fund research for better treatment and a cure. AFA was founded in 2002 by a family caregiver to ensure that families affected by Alzheimer's disease and other dementia-related illnesses always have a place to turn for help and support.

AFA'S SERVICES INCLUDE:

- **A National Toll-Free Helpline** staffed entirely by licensed social workers and available seven days a week by phone (866-232-8484) web chat (www.alzfdn.org) and text message (646-586-5283). The web chat and text message features can serve individuals in more than 90 different languages.
- **The National Memory Screening Program** which provides free memory screenings across the country.
- **Free activity and therapeutic programming**
- **Telephone-based support groups**
- **Free educational webinars and conferences**
- **Professional Training** (AFA is an approved continuing education provider by the New York State Education Department for licensed social workers. Each professional training is also approved by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) and pre-approved by the Commission for Case Management Certification (CCMC) to provide CE credits for licensed social workers, certified case managers and other professionals in all 50 states.)



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THE APARTMENT

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About The Apartment

Alzheimer's disease and other dementia-related illnesses continue to affect a growing number of individuals. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates the number of people in the United States living with Alzheimer's disease will more than double by 2060—from more than 6 million now to 14 million. Dementia-related illnesses impact the mind and affect virtually every aspect of a person's life, including making many facets of daily living more difficult.

Most residences are not built with the needs of an individual living with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia-related illnesses in mind. However, almost every part of a residence can impact quality of life for someone living with a dementia-related illness and their family care partners. Even seemingly-cosmetic choices, such as wall colors, furniture patterns, and dishware, make a difference.

AFA created The Apartment—a model studio residence built in AFA's New York City headquarters—to showcase ways that practical design and technology can greatly increase the quality of life for someone living with dementia and help family care partners protect their loved ones' safety.

This booklet will take you through each area of the apartment, illustrating and explaining different tools—technology, products, colors, patterns—you can use to



make a home safer and more comfortable for someone living with a dementia-related illness.

These features can be used in a variety of “homes”: single family houses, apartments, condominiums or townhouses.

This guide includes what is in The Apartment, but it is not meant to be exclusive—we encourage you to explore these and other types of dementia-friendly adaptations or products that may work for you.

Overall Features

Lighting, paint colors and even décor can all play a role in improving quality of life for someone living with a dementia-related illness. Throughout the apartment, certain overall features are used to create a dementia-friendly atmosphere.

Color scheme/contrast: Colors can be used to help with mood. For example, blue often has a calming effect and is great to use in places that promote relaxation, such as lounge areas, bathrooms and bedrooms—in this guide, you will see blue used in these rooms on the couch, bed, bedside chair and shower. Brighter colors like red, purple and orange can be energetic and stimulating, and, therefore, may not be the best choice to use in these rooms.

Color contrast is important too—it aids with vision, depth perception and spatial orientation. In the apartment's kitchen, yellow paint creates tasteful contrast between the wall and the white cabinets, making them easier to see. In the dining area, dishware contrasts with the white table to highlight the food and aid with eating.

Lighting: Lighting obviously influences eyesight, but it can also affect the body and behavior. Blue light rays stimulate the brain, increase alertness and elevate energy levels, but also negatively impact sleep quality in the evening. Lights which produce glare may hinder vision for someone with dementia. Flickering lights can increase agitation.

Optimum glare-free lighting is used throughout the apartment to aid with sight. Lights operate with a circadian rhythm mimicking natural night-day patterns of high blue light in the day and low blue light at night to improve sleep and reduce agitation. Ceiling lights can be controlled through an app from inside or outside the home, allowing care partners to set timers or change settings.

Battery-operated floor-level night lights in the bedroom and bathroom that turn on automatically in the dark can help guard against falls if the person gets up to use the bathroom in the middle of the night.



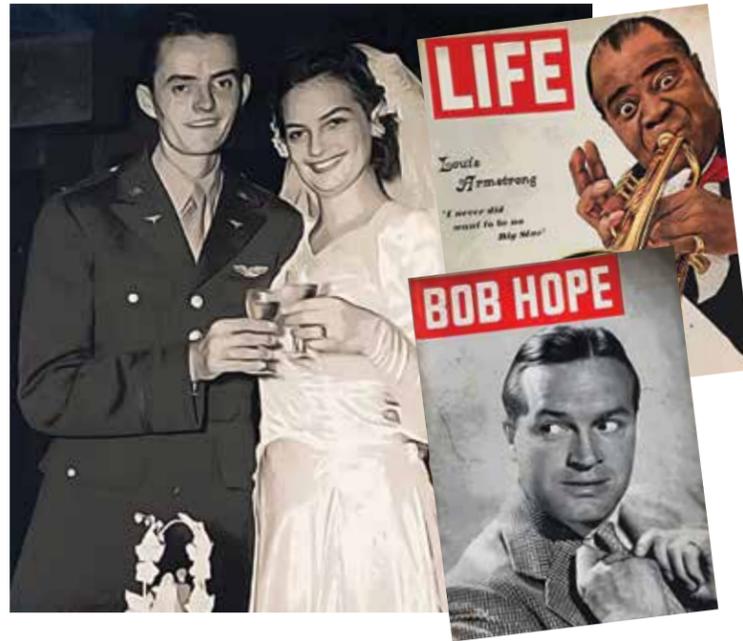
Reminiscent decorations: Décor and photos can serve a purpose beyond making a home aesthetically pleasing—they can promote familiarity, aid with mood and assist with memory recall.

Beach/nautical-themed pictures in the apartment blend with the calming blue colors and promote positive memories for someone who enjoys the sea. Vintage magazines on shelves and tables help stimulate memory and remind the person about a familiar time period from their past. Family photos reinforce the faces of cherished loved ones.

Technology: Technological tools can provide additional support to care partners, especially if they aren't in the home with the individual living with a dementia-related illness. Interactive virtual assistant technology, such as Google Assistant or Amazon Echo/Alexa, allows caregivers to schedule reminders and events that will be audibly played for a loved one, such as "it's lunchtime now" or "time to take your medication."

An app-controlled thermostat, such as the Google Nest Learning Thermostat, allows care partners to check, program and change the temperature through an app (either inside or outside the home) as well as by voice through a virtual assistant.

Additional technology tools for specific rooms of the home will be discussed throughout this guide.



Note: To the greatest extent possible and practicable, care partners should involve their loved one in the process of choosing colors, lights and setting up voice reminders (some virtual assistants come with different voice options). This may help these things seem more familiar to the person when they are in the home.

The Entryway

Creating a dementia-friendly home starts before you even enter the inside! Customizing an entryway to make it unique and personalized for the individual living with dementia aids with memory recall and helps them distinguish their home.

BY THE NUMBERS

1. Unique **door decoration** (in this case a bright red wreath) is easily recognizable and helps the person identify their home.
2. **Door lock** which can be used with a traditional key or passcode. Passcode can be changed remotely at any time.
3. Lever-style **door handle** that pushes down, rather than a round doorknob which needs to be gripped and twisted, may be easier for someone with dexterity challenges to operate.
4. Blue **door color** creates contrast with the interior wall to improve sight and depth perception.
5. **Shelf** with hooks that allow for easy access to hang jackets, keys, hats, pocketbooks and scarves.

Tip: Placing items such as keys, coats or purses near the door may be a trigger for someone who has a tendency to wander from the home. If the person has repeatedly wandered from home, consider moving these items away from the entryway and storing them in a less visible location.

Note: Video doorbells can also be a useful tool for care partners to utilize at an entryway and are discussed in the "home safety" section later in this guide.



The Kitchen

Cooking is a passion for many people, but kitchens contain a number of potential safety hazards for even the most experienced culinary masters. Those can be magnified for someone living with dementia, especially the risk of fire. Here are tools caregivers can use to help keep a loved one safe, while also providing a level of independence to those who enjoy and are still able to cook.

BY THE NUMBERS

1. **Smart Refrigerator** that allows caregivers to display notes/reminders, photos and appointments, either in-person or using an app. The app also enables caregivers to see inside the fridge through a built-in camera to make sure their loved one is eating and food is fresh.
2. **Smart burners** with temperature control technology that prevents burners from reaching the temperature at which most cooking oils autoignite. These can be used to replace electric coils and are easily installed.



Tip: A lightweight aluminum stove cover can hide the burners when the stove is not in use, as well as create additional counter space. This is particularly useful if cooking becomes too dangerous for the person with dementia.

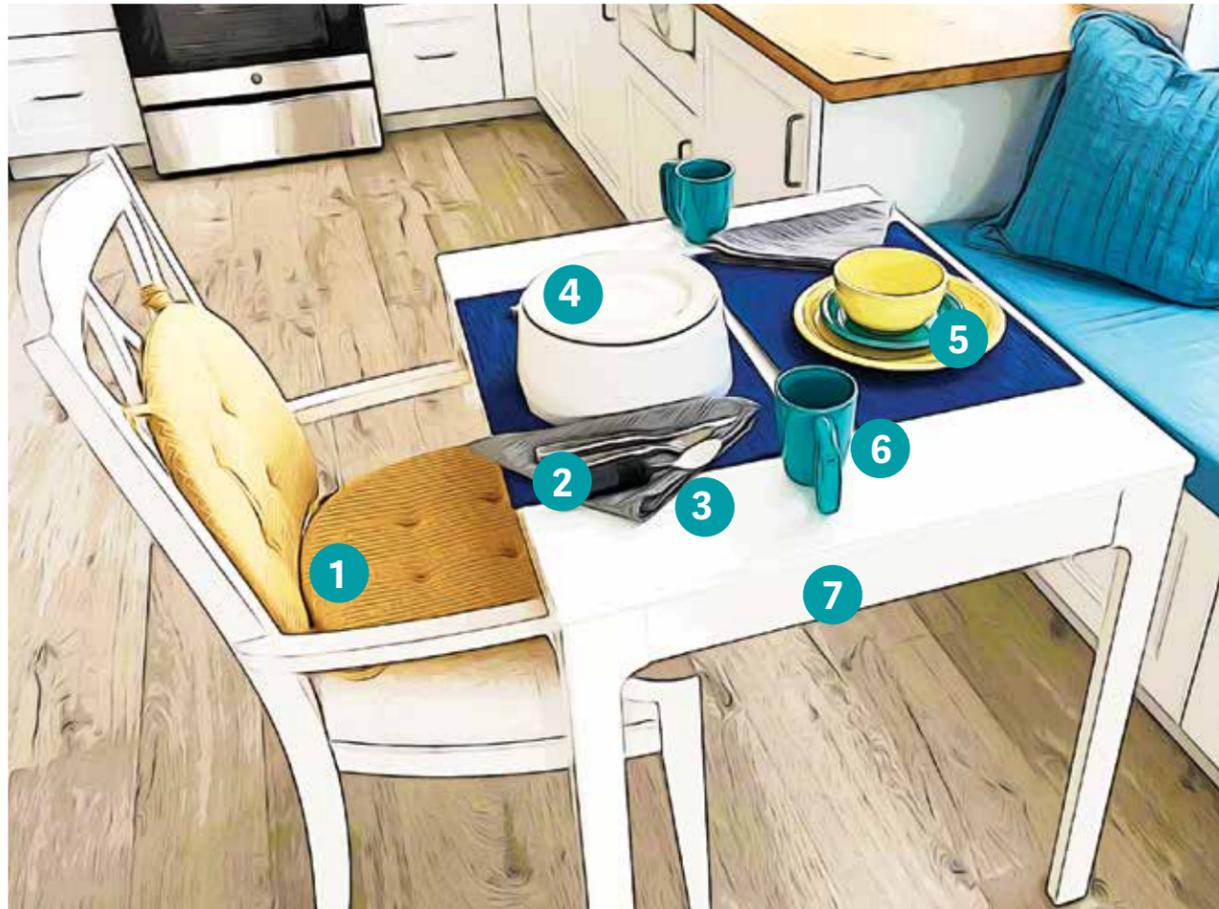
3. See-through, plastic **food storage containers** with labels for nonperishable items such as pasta, cereal, coffee and tea provide visual memory cues.
4. Electric **tea kettle** that automatically turns off when on for too long.
5. **Automatic fire extinguishers** over the stove top, which magnetically attach to the inside of the hood, dispense baking soda if a cooking fire occurs.

6. Countertop **microwave oven** with large dials, maximum time controls and easy-to-use cooking guide allows an individual to cook food independently and safely.
7. Clear front **kitchen cabinets** allow individuals to see contents inside, which aids with memory recall.



The Dining Area

Meal time is a great opportunity to socialize and connect. The flavors and aromas of food can also help with mood and create opportunities to reminisce. Whether your home has a full dining room or an eat-in area in the kitchen, you can utilize these adaptations to help make meal time more comfortable and enjoyable for someone living with a dementia-related illness.



BY THE NUMBERS

1. Color contrasting **cushion and protective pad** help with comfort as well as moments of incontinence.
2. **Weighted silverware** helps make eating easier for someone who has tremors.
3. **Coated spoon** helps someone with sensitive gums.
4. **Elevated plate** brings food closer to the mouth and can help someone with neck issues.
5. Color contrast **dishware and place settings** aid with vision and depth perception.
6. Ergonomic **mugs** enhance grip, making it easier to hold and drink beverages.
7. Expandable **table** allows for more people to sit and eat when needed.

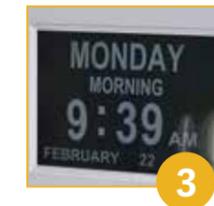
The Living Room

A living room is a place to relax, unwind and be comfortable. Color choices and decorations can help facilitate that as well as making a “simple” technological choice when it comes to watching the television.

BY THE NUMBERS



1. **Simple universal remote** can be preprogrammed to five favorite channels, eliminating confusion and the stress of having to struggle with complicated, multiple remotes. Large button keypad aids with dexterity and sight and the design is made specifically to feel comfortable in the hand.



2. **Couch** with blue fabric promotes calm and provides color contrast for sight.
3. Large text **digital clock** which includes the time, date, and day of the week helps the person with time and date orientation. Clock is wall mountable, includes an auto-night dimmer and can be viewed in eight different languages.

4. **Reminiscent decorations** (vintage magazines) on side table and shelf help stimulate memory and remind the person about a familiar time period from their past.

5. Soothing **artwork** featuring a peaceful blue sea complements the calming vibe.

6. **Console** which serves as an activity center and stores cognitively stimulating items, such as photo albums, music, and arts & crafts.



The Bedroom

Each day begins and ends in the bedroom, which is why it's important to use items and features that promote comfort, create positive mood and decrease agitation.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 1. Ergonomic motion chair** glides back and forth, supports the neck and includes a memory foam seat to reduce sores. The chair self-locks when the person stands up to lessen the chance of falling and makes getting up and down easier.
- 2. Round end tables** on both sides of the bed eliminate injuries from bumping against sharp corners.
- 3. Telephone** with large number buttons and photo dialing capability allows the user to dial someone by pressing their picture. Phone can also be set to only receive calls if the person struggles to remember how often they make calls.



- Stainless steel lamps with a cord and ball to turn on/off include **circadian light bulbs** that reduce sleep-disturbing blue light and eliminate headache-inducing flicker, helping improve sleep quality and decrease agitation.
- Adjustable residential style bed with soft fabric headboard** for safer transferring and easier caregiving in mid/late stage. The bed is operated by remote control and moves up and down, with reclining options for head and feet as well (if you are adjusting the bed for the person while they are on it, always tell them before moving it).

Tip: Side rails or bed handles can be added as needed to guard against falls, along with a bedside sensor that alerts when someone gets out of bed. Side rails should not be used as an entrapment—never use full bed-length side rails.

- Soothing colored, lively patterned **comforter** (if patterns become problematic, plain-colored blankets, such as the yellow one on the foot of the bed, can be used as well).
- Waterproof gel **mattress** supports healthy skin.
- Large text **digital clock** which includes the time, date, and day of the week helps the person with time and date orientation. Clock is wall mountable, includes an auto-night dimmer and can be viewed in eight different languages.

Dressing and Clothing

ADAPT DRESSERS BY:

- Adding **labels** for contents in each drawer to help with memory cueing.
- Using **color contrast knobs** (seen on the top drawer) to help with vision.

If gripping is a problem, "pole handles" (seen on the other drawers) can also be used.
- Covering sharp edges with **clear rubber corner protectors** to help prevent accidents while moving around the home.

Tip: Certain types of clothes often work better for someone living with dementia. Shirts with magnetic buttons instead of traditional ones, pants that can be slipped on or off without buttoning or zipping, and tops with larger arm holes which can be taken on/off more easily are all types of dementia-friendly clothing.

Tip: Tall dressers and other pieces of furniture should be bolted to the wall to avoid falling.



The Bathroom

Bathrooms predominantly contain hard surfaces (sink, toilet, shower/tub, floor) and are more likely to have slipping hazards such as water on the floor, increasing both the chances of falling and severity of injury. Many of the dementia-friendly adaptations for the apartment bathroom contain a safety component as well.

BY THE NUMBERS

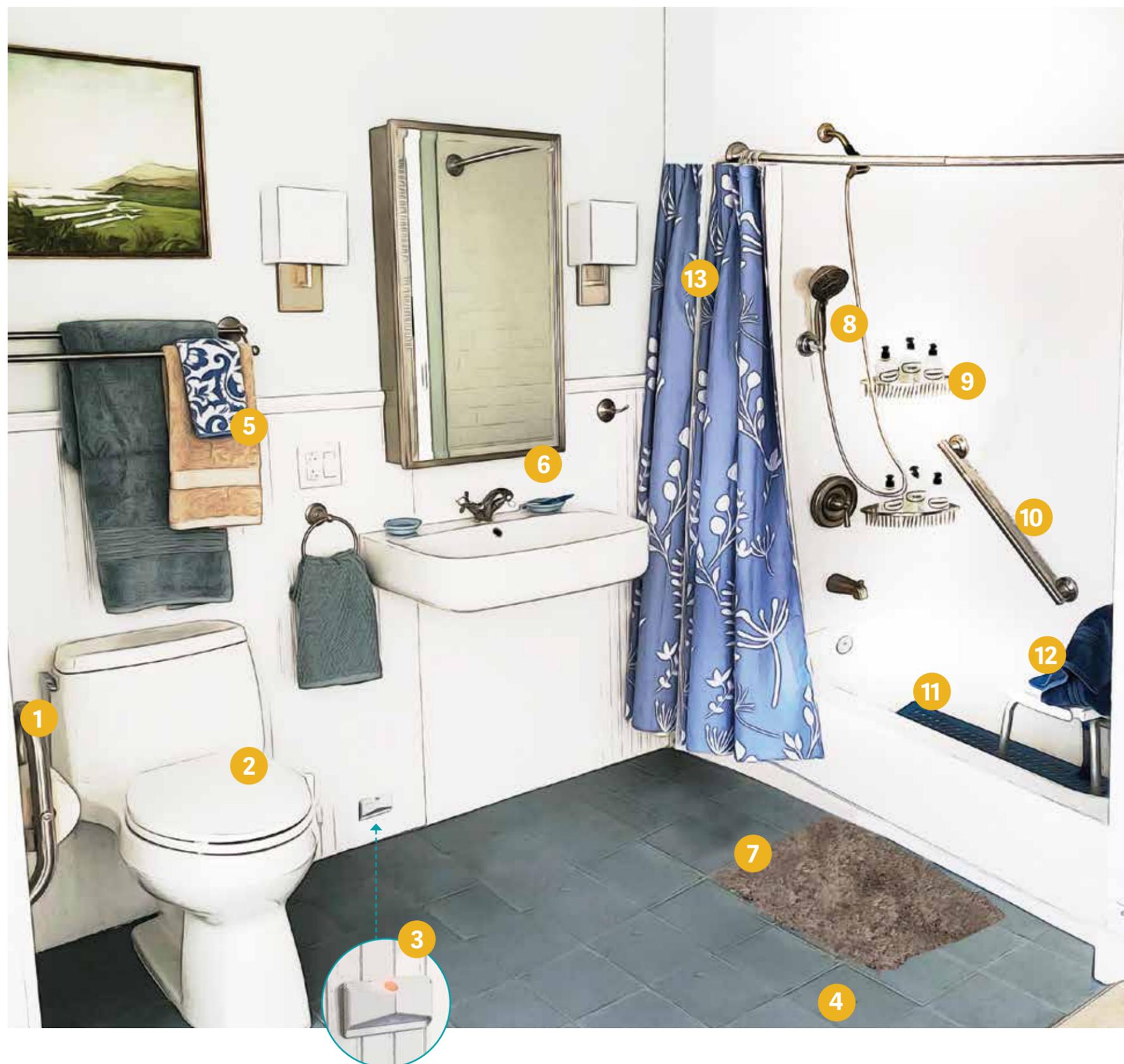
- 1. Grab bar** integrated with the toilet paper holder to aid with sitting down and standing up.
- 2. Comfort-height toilet** which has a higher seat top (17 inches from the floor, as opposed to 15 inches for a standard toilet), making it easier for someone with mobility problems to sit and stand.
- 3. Automatic night light** that illuminates in the dark to help guide the person and safeguard against falls.
- 4. Floor tiles** are a cool blue/gray, yet not too dark that they could appear as a large hole for someone feeling disoriented. Matte color tiles with a nonslip finish reduce glare and potential fall hazards (avoid patterns and white grout for bathroom floor).
- 5. Color contrast towel** for easier perception.
- 6. Sink and medicine cabinet** are positioned at a height which is accessible from both the seated and standing position (note: mirrors can be covered if reflections are frightening). Sink faucet has separate handles for hot and cold water.

Tip: Some individuals do better with separate dials to turn for a faucet, while others find it easier to use a single handle or dial for hot and cold.

- 7. Bathroom rug** with rubberized backing to reduce slipping. If the person is experiencing mobility problems, only put it out during bath time and leave on the side of the tub when finished.

- 8. Adjustable-height, handheld shower head** can be used in the seated or standing position and includes a pause button to avoid having to repeatedly turn the water on and off (beneficial for individuals with sensitive skin).
- 9. Shower shelves** with two different heights allow body wash, shampoo and other items to be accessible while seated or standing.
- 10. Angled, vertical grab bar** with rubber grip pads helps to reduce slippage.
- 11. Color contrast bathtub mat** helps prevent falls and enhance depth perception.
- 12. Transfer bath chair** allows the person's legs to swing over and into the bathtub. Including color contrast soft padding is helpful as well.
- 13. Color contrast shower curtain** has a lively, soothing plant pattern (note: patterns can cause disorientation and dizziness for some, so choose pattern wisely).

Tip: If the person's skin sensitivity to water makes showering challenging, a body wash/shampoo that does not require rinsing with water may be helpful. These are usually available in pharmacies and online.



Home Safety

Safety is every family care partner’s number-one concern, and technology has made it easier for them to safeguard their loved ones’ homes. In addition to the safety steps discussed in the individual room sections of this guide, here are other safety features that care partners can utilize.



Smart Smoke Alarm and Carbon Monoxide Alarm: Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are crucial home safety equipment, but “smart alarms” go beyond simply beeping at the sign of trouble. Smart alarms, such as the Google Nest Protect, have friendly human voices that alert you to danger and tell you where in the house it is. Alarms can be synched together so warnings are broadcast simultaneously throughout the entire home, not just where the problem is, and also include color lighting (green, yellow, red) to communicate if there’s an emergency and enhance visibility. Smart alarms are self-testing and will tell you well in advance that a battery needs to be changed. The best part—it can be controlled by an app, enabling care partners who live elsewhere to check the system, be alerted to potential trouble and know if a battery needs to be changed, without having a loud “beep” in traditional smoke alarms.



Alert System: Wandering is a common and potentially dangerous behavior for an individual living with a dementia-related illness. Someone with dementia who wanders may quickly become disoriented, not remember how to get home or how, or who, to call for help. Additionally, because of dementia’s impact on cognition, they may be less discerning about opening their door and letting strangers into the home.

Video doorbells, such as the Google Nest Hello, placed at the door can alert care partners through a smart phone notification when someone is approaching or leaving the door, as well as see in real time what’s happening or talk through the doorbell to the person near the door. These systems can be controlled by app from anywhere.



Motion Paging System: Even if a family care partner lives in the same home as the person with dementia, wandering can still be a challenge—especially if it happens in the middle of the night when a care partner may be asleep. The motion paging system, created by Smart Caregiver, can be placed by the individual’s bedside or bedroom door. When motion is detected, a silent wireless signal is sent to the care partner through a lightweight, pocket-sized pager. Utilizing a pager, rather than a loud, audible alarm in the person with dementia’s room, helps prevent them from becoming startled, frightened or agitated.

**Note: The products listed are cited as examples because they are used in the AFA Apartment—other similar products may be available as well. Consumers should make their own decisions about which products are best for them.*

Product List

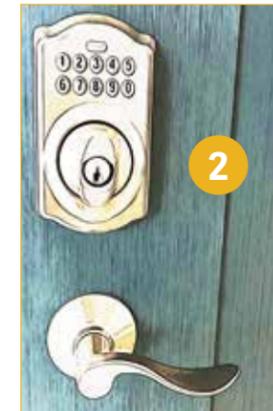
Lighting:

1. Phillips Hue Smart Circadian Lighting System



Entryway:

2. Lock/Door Handle: Schlage Connected Keypad Deadbolt



Kitchen:

3. Refrigerator: Samsung Family Hub Refrigerator
4. Automatic Fire Extinguishers: StoveTop FireStop Rangehood
5. Burners: Pioneering Technology SmartBurner (utilized on a GE Slide-In Electric Range)
6. Stove Top Cover: Stove Topper for Electric Cooktops and Ranges
7. Microwave: Panasonic Commercial Microwave Oven
8. Tea Kettle: Chefman Cordless Electric Tea Kettle



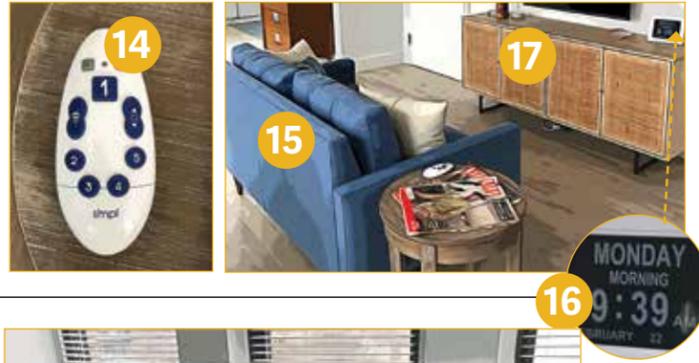
Dining Area:

9. Mugs: Jamber Coffee Mug
10. Elevated Plate: Meal Lifter Eating Aid
11. Silverware: Kinsman Weighted Utensils
12. Coated Spoon: Oxo Good Grip Coated Spoon
13. Table: Ikea Ekedalen



Living Room:

- 14. Remote: SmpI Remote
- 15. Couch: Crate and Barrel Petrie Midcentury Love Seat
- 16. Clock: Jaihonda Digital Day Calendar Clock
- 17. Console: Pottery Barn Dolores Cane Buffet Cabinet



Bedroom:

- 18. Bed: Supernal Recliner Bed
- 19. Headboard: Cambridge Tufted Upholstered Headboard
- 20. Chair: Furnished Living Motion Chair
- 21. Clock: Jaihonda Digital Day Calendar Clock
- 22. Dresser: West Elm Mid-Century 5 Drawer Narrow Dresser
- 23. Edge Protectors (used on dresser): CalMyotis Corner Protectors
- 24. Lighting: Bedtime Bulb by SimpleBulb Inc.
- 25. Phone: Future Call Picture Care Phone



Bathroom:

- 26. Toilet Paper Holder: Invisia 2-in-1 Toilet Roll Holder with Integrated Grab Bar
- 27. Toilet: Kohler Santa Rosa Comfort Height Toilet
- 28. Sink: Nameeks Moon Wall Mounted Bathroom Sink
- 29. Showerhead: Delta Handheld Shower
- 30. Chair: Personal Care Products Padded Bath Chair
- 31. Grab Bar: Moen Home Care Bath Safety Grab Bar with Comfort Grip Pad



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Thank You to Our Supporters

The Alzheimer's Foundation of America gratefully acknowledges and thanks the following organizations and individuals for their support in creating the AFA Apartment.



DARYL & STEVEN ROTH
FOUNDATION

POTTERY BARN

ROBERT & DALE ROSEN
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION



Nest



Interior Designer of The Apartment: Rosemary Bakker, President, Age-Friendly Design, Inc.



THE APARTMENT

A Guide to Creating a Dementia-Friendly Home



Nearly every aspect of a home—from appliances and furniture to the paint on the wall—can impact quality of life for someone living with a dementia-related illness. However, most residences are not built with the needs of an individual living with dementia in mind.

That's why the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) created The Apartment—to demonstrate ways that certain design features and technology can make a positive difference for both individuals living with a dementia-related illness and their family care partners.

This guide takes you through The Apartment, room by room, and shows you different tools and modifications you can use in any type of home to make it safer and more comfortable for someone with dementia.

Additional information about caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease and other dementia-related illnesses can be obtained by visiting www.alzfdn.org or calling AFA's Helpline at 866-232-8484.

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