



## **FACT SHEET:** **SAFETY**

1. Don't expect the patient to take responsibility for his own safety. Even a mildly impaired person may have lost the judgment he needs to avoid accidents. Do not take the patient's word that he can perform a task if there is a chance he can hurt himself.
2. If the person wanders and you think he could hurt himself in your neighbor's yard, alert them to the possibility. You may want to tell them that the person has impaired judgment and memory, and can no longer make responsible decisions.
3. Be aware of the fact that accidents are most likely to occur when you or the patient are frustrated or tired, and when you are in a hurry.
4. Maintain an uncluttered house and keep furniture in its usual place. Keep passageways clear, especially from the patient's bed to the bathroom.
5. Remove objects in the house that the person can trip over such as throw rugs, extension cords, low footstools, and the bathroom scale.
6. You may decide that some of your furniture needs to be changed. Glass table tops, chairs that are easily tipped over, and furniture with sharp edges are hazards.
7. The patient may put inappropriate items in his/her mouth. Watch for this behavior. If it occurs, you may need to remove items such as plants, plastic flowers, cosmetics, and shoe polish. You may also need to put small items such as buttons and pins out of sight.
8. Remove knickknacks that can confuse the person or objects that you treasure and want to protect.
9. Put power tools and electrical appliances (iron, hair dryer, shave, and kitchen appliances) where the patient can't get them.
10. Put the car keys and household keys out of sight and in a safe place.
11. Put **ALL** medicines out of reach or lock them up.
12. Dangerous chemicals and substances should be stored safely out of reach.
13. The person can accidentally lock himself/herself in a room. Make sure that you have keys in a place you have easy access to such as a safe place in the kitchen. It may be easiest to install non-locking door latches, or simply tape the latches, so that they can't accidentally be locked.
14. You may need to remove the knobs from the stove. Some caregivers remove the fuse or open the circuit breaker (which stops the flow of electricity) when they aren't using the kitchen.
15. Lock up potentially dangerous kitchen implements such as knives and other sharp objects. Razor blades should be kept out of reach.
16. Keep pot handles away from the edge of the stove.

17. The patient may burn himself/herself on a floor or wall furnace. To avoid this problem, block off a wall furnace with a chair, and put a gate around a floor furnace.
18. An Alzheimer's patient may try to climb out of a window and fall. You may need to lock the windows or, in some way, limit the amount that they can be opened.
19. Stairs can be dangerous, particularly at night. You may want to consider putting gates at the top and bottom.
20. Never let the person smoke unsupervised. Keep matches and other smoking material out of reach.
21. You may want to have a fire extinguisher in the house.
22. You can lower the temperature on your water heater so that the patient doesn't scald himself/herself at the faucet. A water heater set between 135°F and 140° is hot enough to burn the skin instantly.
23. Install grab (support) bars in the tub and shower, and on the toilet.
24. It is important to keep the patient safely in the house during the night and sometimes during the day. You can put a door lock at the top of the door out of reach, or at the bottom of the door where the patient won't think to look for it. It may be easiest to install dead bolt locks (which can be locked with a key) on the doors.
25. To help your patient get safely to the bathroom during the night, keep a night light on in the bathroom, and in the hallway from the bedroom to the bathroom.
26. Many falls are caused by dizziness. The older the person or the patient who is taking a tranquilizer or an antidepressant should change position slowly, especially when getting out of bed. Have the patient first sit on the edge of the bed a few minutes to adjust to the upright position. Then have him/her stand up and pause for a minute before he/she starts walking.
27. To help maintain balance while getting out of bed, a hand-rail can be installed on the wall near the bed.
28. If the person has the problem of falling out of bed during the night, you may want to place his/her mattress on the floor.
29. Outdoor swimming pools (yours and your neighbor's) are dangerous. Make sure that the patient cannot get to one.
30. Steps are a common hazard for a confused, clumsy person. Attach no-skid tape to the surface and edge of the steps. The patient may not be able to maneuver steps safely without your help.
31. Do not leave the patient alone in the car. He/She may wander away or be bothered by strangers. He/She could cause an accident by releasing the brake or starting the ignition.
32. When driving with a confused person, lock the doors and use a seat belt.
33. It is wise to have knowledge of first aid procedures. The American Red Cross offers classes in first aid covering a variety of emergency situations. Contact your local office for class schedules and home safety manuals available to the public.

**Home Safety Checklist**

This checklist is used to identify fall hazards in the home. After identification, hazards should be eliminated or reduced. One point is given for every "NO" answer.

	YES	NO
<b>Housekeeping</b>		
1. Do you clean up spills as soon as they occur?	_____	_____
2. Do you keep floors and stairways clean and free of clutter?	_____	_____
3. Do you put away books, magazines, sewing supplies, and other objects as soon as you're through with them and never leave them on floors or stairways?	_____	_____
4. Do you store frequently used items on shelves that are within easy reach?	_____	_____
<b>Floors</b>		
5. Do you keep everyone from walking on freshly washed floors before they're dry?	_____	_____
6. If you wax floors, do you apply two thin coats and buff each thoroughly or use self-polishing, nonskid wax?	_____	_____
7. Do all small rugs have nonskid backings?	_____	_____
8. Have you eliminated small rugs at the tops and bottoms of stairways?	_____	_____
9. Are all carpet edges tacked down?	_____	_____
10. Are rugs and carpets free of curled edges, worn spots, and rips?	_____	_____
11. Have you chosen rugs and carpets with short, dense pile?	_____	_____
12. Are rugs and carpets installed over good-quality, medium-thick pads?	_____	_____
<b>Bathroom</b>		
13. Do you use a rubber mat or no slip decals in the tub or shower?	_____	_____
14. Do you have a grab bar securely anchored over the tub or on the shower wall?	_____	_____
15. Do you have a nonskid rug on the bathroom floor?	_____	_____
16. Do you keep soap in an easy-to-reach receptacle?	_____	_____
<b>Traffic lanes</b>		
17. Can you walk across every room in your home, and from one room to another, without detouring around furniture?	_____	_____
18. Is the traffic lane from your bedroom to the bathroom free of obstacles?	_____	_____
19. Are telephone and appliance cords kept away from areas where people walk?	_____	_____
<b>Lighting</b>		
20. Do you have light switches near every doorway?	_____	_____
21. Do you have enough good lighting to eliminate shadowy areas?	_____	_____

- |   | YES   | NO    |
|---|-------|-------|
| 22. Do you have a lamp or light switch within easy reach of your bed?                                       | _____ | _____ |
| 23. Do you have night-lights in your bathroom and in the hallway leading from your bedroom to the bathroom? | _____ | _____ |

**Lighting** *(continued)*

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|---|-------|-------|
| 24. Are all stairways well lighted?                                       | _____ | _____ |
| 25. Do you have light switches at both the tops and bottoms of stairways? | _____ | _____ |

**Stairways**

- |  |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|
| 26. Do securely fastened handrails extend the full length of the stairs on each side of stairways?                 | _____ | _____ |
| 27. Do rails stand out from the walls so you can get a good grip?  | _____ | _____ |
| 28. Are rails distinctly shaped so you're alerted when you reach the end of a stairway?                            | _____ | _____ |
| 29. Are all stairways in good condition, with no broken, sagging, or sloping steps?                                | _____ | _____ |
| 30. Are all stairway carpeting and metal edges securely fastened and in good condition?                            | _____ | _____ |
| 31. Have you replaced any single-level steps with gradually rising ramps or made sure such steps are well lighted? | _____ | _____ |

**Ladders and step stools**

- |  |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|
| 32. Do you have a sturdy step stool that you use to reach high cupboard and closet shelves?  | _____ | _____ |
| 33. Are all ladders and step stools in good condition?   | _____ | _____ |
| 34. Do you always use a step stool or ladder that's tall enough for the job?   | _____ | _____ |
| 35. Do you always set up your ladder or step stool on a firm, level base that's free of clutter?                                   | _____ | _____ |
| 36. Before you climb a ladder or step stool, do you always make sure it's fully open and that the stepladder spreaders are locked? | _____ | _____ |
| 37. When you use a ladder or step stool, do you face the steps and keep your body between the side rails?                          | _____ | _____ |
| 38. Do you avoid standing on top of a step stool or climbing beyond the second step from the top on a stepladder?                  | _____ | _____ |

**Outdoor areas**

- |   |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|
| 39. Are walks and driveways in your yard and other areas free of breaks?            | _____ | _____ |
| 40. Are lawns and gardens free of holes?  | _____ | _____ |
| 41. Do you put away garden tools and hoses when they're not in use?                 | _____ | _____ |
| 42. Are outdoor areas keep free of rocks, loose boards, and other tripping hazards? | _____ | _____ |
| 43. Do you keep outdoor walkways, steps, and porches free of wet leaves and snow?   | _____ | _____ |

	YES	NO
44. Do you sprinkle icy outdoor areas with deicers as soon as possible after a snowfall or freeze?	_____	_____
45. Do you have mats at doorways for people to wipe their feet on?	_____	_____
46. Do you know the safest way of walking when you can't avoid walking on a slippery surface?	_____	_____
<b>Footwear</b>		
47. Do your shoes have soles and heels that provide good traction?	_____	_____
48. Do you wear house slippers that fit well and don't fall off?	_____	_____
49. Do you avoid walking in stocking feet?	_____	_____
50. Do you wear low-heeled oxfords, loafers, or good-quality sneakers when you work in your house or yard?	_____	_____
51. Do you replace boots or galoshes when their soles or heels are worn too smooth to keep you from slipping on wet or icy surfaces?	_____	_____
<b>Personal precautions</b>		
52. Are you always alert for unexpected hazards, such as out-of-place furniture?	_____	_____
53. If young grandchildren visit, are you alert for children playing on the floor and toys left in your path?	_____	_____
54. If you have pets, are you alert for sudden movements across your path and pets getting underfoot?	_____	_____
55. When you carry bulky packages, do you make sure they don't obstruct your vision?	_____	_____
56. Do you divide large loads into smaller loads whenever possible?	_____	_____
57. When you reach or bend, do you hold onto a firm support and avoid throwing your head back or turning it too far?	_____	_____
58. Do you always use a ladder or step stool to reach high places and never stand on a chair?	_____	_____
59. Do you always move deliberately and avoid rushing to answer the phone or doorbell?	_____	_____
60. Do you take time to get your balance when you change position from lying down to sitting and from sitting to standing?	_____	_____
61. Do you hold onto grab bars when you change position in the tub or shower?	_____	_____
62. Do you keep yourself in good condition with moderate exercise, good diet, adequate rest, and regular medical checkups?	_____	_____
63. If you wear glasses, is your prescription up-to-date?	_____	_____
64. Do you know how to reduce injury in a fall?	_____	_____
65. If you live alone, do you have daily contact with a friend or neighbor?	_____	_____

SCORE = Total number of "NO" answers: \_\_\_\_\_

Show this list to your doctor. What does your SCORE mean?

## Home Safety Checklist

1- 7 = Excellent

8-14 = Good

15 or higher = Hazardous. Changes need to be made in your home to make it safer.

## MedicAlert® + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return®

The Alzheimer's Association and MedicAlert have formed an alliance to improve the safety of individuals with Alzheimer's or related dementia. MedicAlert® + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return® is a 24-hour nationwide emergency response service for individuals with Alzheimer's or a related dementia that wander or who have a medical emergency.



### How MedicAlert + Safe Return works

If an individual with Alzheimer's or related dementia wanders and becomes lost, caregivers can call the 24-hour emergency response line (1.800.625-3780) to report it. A community support network will be activated, including local Alzheimer's Association chapters and law enforcement agencies, to help reunite the family member or caregiver with the person who wandered. With this enhanced service, critical medical information will be provided to emergency responders when needed.

### MedicAlert + Safe Return features

- One identification product (bracelet or necklace) that serves two purposes. It provides emergency medical information and assists in the event of a wandering incident.
- The member's personal health record lists medical conditions, medications and allergies and can be updated 24 hours a day through a private online account or by calling the toll-free number during business hours.
- A national database that includes a member's photo and emergency contact information to help reunite the lost person with his or her caregivers.
- The MedicAlert + Safe Return hotline activates the resources of law enforcement, medical professionals and the local chapter staff to assist the member when an incident – either wandering or medical emergency – occurs.

### Cost for MedicAlert + Safe Return products

- The enrollment fee is \$49.95 with an annual renewal fee of \$25. The enrollment kit includes 24-hour emergency response system, ID jewelry (bracelet or necklace), personalized emergency wallet card, personal health record, and "6 steps to a Safe Return refrigerator magnet," which provides useful tips when someone is missing.
- Companion caregiver jewelry can be purchased for \$25 with an annual renewal fee of \$25, which includes everything listed above.

### For safety and peace of mind, enroll in MedicAlert + Safe Return today:

Call **1.888.572.8566** (6 a.m. – 7 p.m. (PST) Monday – Friday and 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. (PST) Saturday) or online at **[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)**.

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research.

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**1.800.272.3900 | [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)**

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