

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THOSE WITH DEMENTIA WHO LIVE ALONE

It is especially important to build rapport and develop effective communication with the person with dementia living alone. Frequently, individuals with dementia who live alone have a strong sense of independence, so building rapport may take time.

- People who live alone can be described by one of the following general categories:
 - They live alone but receive frequent support from relatives and friends living nearby.
 - They live alone with support from long-distance caregivers, usually adult children or siblings.
 - They have no close family members or friends to provide monitoring or assistance—this is the most vulnerable group.

Note: People with dementia who live alone are at high risk for self-neglect.

- Some general guidelines for working with individuals with dementia who live alone include the following:
 - Always introduce yourself and mention the name of a family member or friend to help the person understand why you are there. If possible, arrange for a family member, friend, or home care provider with whom the individual has a relationship to introduce you to the person the first time you visit.
 - Allow sufficient time to build trust. Be prepared to participate in friendly conversation while the person gets more comfortable with you.
 - If the person is suspicious, a call from the agency (to confirm that the provider is there to help) or from a family member (to verify that it is all right to let the provider in) may be enough to gain entrance.
 - If the person will not open the door, sometimes leaving and attempting to visit again later the same day or another day is an effective approach.
 - Build rapport by learning about the person's interests, history, favorite memories, family, and friends.
 - Monitor food and fluid intake. If meals are being delivered, check to see that they are being eaten. Serve water and other liquids during visits. Dehydration is a serious risk.
 - Check for fire and other safety risks as part of every visit, including food left cooking on the stove, evidence of small fires, burns on the person or on furniture, and frayed or loose wires.
 - Provide support to help the person with dementia maintain as much independence as possible.
 - Anticipate and avoid crisis situations.

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