

Winter Weather Tips to Keep People Living with Dementia Safe

Winter weather conditions — colder temperatures, snow, ice and early darkness — can be potentially dangerous and even life-threatening for the more than 6 million Americans living Alzheimer’s and other dementia. For family caregivers, the stress and challenges to keep their loved ones safe during this time can be overwhelming. By preparing in advance, caregivers can make a big difference in keeping their loved one with Alzheimer’s and other dementia safe.

“People living with Alzheimer’s and other dementia can be vulnerable during winter weather because their judgment may be impaired and they may be unable to communicate discomfort,” said Monica Moreno, senior director, care and support, Alzheimer’s Association. “It’s really important to take extra precautions with these individuals when there is severe winter weather or other excessive weather conditions like snow or ice.”

The Alzheimer’s Association offers these tips to keep people living with dementia safe during the winter months:

- **Be prepared.** Winter storms can be dangerous. Check weather conditions regularly and have emergency plans in place.
- **Bundle up.** Help the person living with Alzheimer’s dress warmly for winter weather conditions by wearing dry, loose-fitting layers and covering exposed skin.
- **Prevent slips.** Balance and mobility can be a challenge for a person living with Alzheimer’s or dementia. Assume all surfaces are slick; assist the person by taking smaller steps and slowing down, so they can match gait and speed to a safer level.
- **Take advantage of the daylight.** Winter months bring decreased sunlight and shorter days. Visual perception can be a challenge for those living with Alzheimer’s or other dementias, and can cause increased confusion or disorientation in dark or shadowy environments both inside and out.
- **Prevent wandering.** Wandering is one of the most frequent and challenging problems that caregivers face and can be extremely dangerous in colder conditions. Shorter days during winter months can also increase the risk of “sundowning.” Monitor closely for agitation or restlessness as day transitions into night. The Alzheimer’s Association offers these tips to [combat sundowning](#).
- **Buddy up:** An Alzheimer’s Association survey says a whopping 84 percent of caregivers said they would like more support in providing care for someone with Alzheimer’s or another form of dementia, especially from their family. It can be hard for caregivers to find time to complete simple tasks outside of the home. Don’t hesitate to ask others for help with errands, grocery shopping or with snow/ice removal.

More safety tips can be found by visiting the [Alzheimer's Association](#) website. The Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline also provides reliable information and support to all those who need assistance. Call the helpline toll-free anytime, even holidays, at 1.800.272.3900.

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