

THE ARIZONA GWEP MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2025



ABOUT

The mission of the Arizona Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (AZ-GWEP) is to provide the best possible care through an interprofessional approach to individual, system, community and population level education, training and models of care innovations.

The AZ-GWEP Newsletter is an important forum to share AZ-GWEP activities and highlight your valuable work. Please use this form by the 10th of each month to be featured in the next issue:

[SUBMIT INFO FOR
OUR NEXT ISSUE](#)



Patient Safety Awareness Week, an annual recognition event that occurs in March, seeks to advance important discussions locally and globally, and inspire action to improve the safety of the health care system for both patients and the workforce. This includes a focus on the safety of older adults as a particularly vulnerable patient population. During this time, healthcare organizations often highlight initiatives and education specifically geared towards improving the safety of older adults by raising awareness about potential risks such as falls, medication errors, and complications from chronic conditions.

On [pages 3-8](#) you will find information sheets about home safety for older adults with dementia, including information on falls, fire safety, and guns. These information sheets, along with others, can be downloaded from the Center on Aging's [Care Partner Information Sheets](#) webpage. [Page 9](#) includes an infographic for [Home Safety Tips for Older Adults](#) from the National Institute on Aging.

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PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

MEET JANICE, OUR PARTNER FROM BANNER ALZHEIMER'S INSTITUTE & BANNER SUN HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE (BAI/BSHRI)

Janice Greeno promotes outstanding clinical care, revolutionary research and caregiver support at BAI/BSHRI. Leading Arizona to over 14,000 Dementia Friends and 13 Dementia Friendly communities. Janice chairs the Arizona Memory Café Leaders and the Surprise Action Team & Memory Café. She provides presentations, building an understanding of dementia, reducing stigma, encouraging empathy and sharing resources.



Janice co-hosts the award-winning podcast, [Dementia Untangled](#), helping caregivers navigate the dementia journey. She was recognized as the 2023 Shine a Light on All Dementias "Community Champion" at the Arizona State Capitol.

Janice enjoys sharing love, laughter, good vibes and great conversations with wonderful family and friends. She savors being in nature—morning walks, hiking, yoga in the greenbelt and more. She is blessed to have two of her three young adult children living in Phoenix. She is oh-so-thankful for her adorable grandson, and that he and his dad and mom live closer than they used to!

For More Information: bannerhealth.com/Alzheimers



Connect with our
AZ-GWEP Community
Group Page on LinkedIn

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



ADVANCES IN AGING LECTURE SERIES

MARCH 10TH
12 - 1 pm (MST)

Age Friendly Health System: Focusing on What Matters Most
Lorraine Yentzer

[VIEW PRESENTATION](#)

View archived presentations [here](#)

Download the event flyer



ADVANCES IN AGING LECTURE SERIES

Lorraine Yentzer, AG-ACNP-BC
Palliative Medicine & Hospice, Banner - University Medicine Tucson

INTERPROFESSIONAL PANEL DISCUSSION

Cheryl Lapresse, MD, PhD
Jocelyn Lee, MD
Mindy Fain, MD

Age Friendly Health System: Focusing on What Matters Most

LIVESTREAM
March 10, 2025
12-1 pm (MST)

[HTTPS://STREAMING.PIOOOH.ARIZONA.EDU/STREAMING/2025/10/10/12-1pm-mst/](https://streaming.pioooh.arizona.edu/streaming/2025/10/10/12-1pm-mst/)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe the elements of Age-Friendly Health System Initiative of "What Matters Most"
- Discuss the foundation of "What Matters Most" and importance of aligning care and decisions with the older adult's health outcome goals
- Explore strategies and touch points "What Matters Most" conversations might occur

VIEW ARCHIVED PRESENTATIONS
[HTTPS://STREAMING.PIOOOH.ARIZONA.EDU/STREAMING/2025/10/10/12-1pm-mst/](https://streaming.pioooh.arizona.edu/streaming/2025/10/10/12-1pm-mst/)

CME Credit: Provided by the University of Arizona College of Medicine - Tucson

Accreditation Statement: The University of Arizona College of Medicine - Tucson is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

The University of Arizona College of Medicine - Tucson designates this live activity for a maximum of 1.0 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

Disclosure Statement: All faculty, CME planning committee members, and the CME office relations have disclosed that they have no financial relationships with commercial interest that would constitute a conflict of interest concerning this CME activity.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
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Care Partner Information

Tips for Providing Older Adult Care

Home Safety Issues Part 1: Dementia & Falls

Falls are common among older people, and can be very serious. Falls may cause fractures or other injuries, and people who fall often become very afraid of falling again. Falls can result in a decrease in mobility, loss of independence, and death. People with dementia are at a high risk of falls. Although falls can't always be prevented, there are things to do to decrease falls.

First, it's important to follow the general tips for preventing falls. Then, it's helpful to know how the changes of dementia make falls more common, and what to do to specifically reduce the risk of falls in people with dementia. Also, remember that a person's abilities will change over time as the dementia worsens.

General Tips for Preventing Falls and Injuries

Most falls in older adults are due to a combination of things, such as medications and balance problems. Therefore, most of the time, it takes several changes in order to prevent falls. The table below lists the things to do to reduce the risk of falls and injuries in all older adults.

Risk of Falls and What to Do	
Exercise	Encourage regular exercise, including strength and balance training. Community fall programs are available through your local area agency on aging.
Safe Home Environment	Keep areas well lit. Use night-lights. Remove small rugs, long cords, and other tripping hazards from floors and stairs. Put grab bars in the bathroom by the toilet and shower. A nurse or occupational therapist can help with a home safety check.
Strong Bones	Discuss calcium and vitamin D treatment with the doctor. Also, ask the doctor about osteoporosis.
Foot Care	Foot pain, long nails, and numb or burning feet can cause falls. Wear shoes in the home.
Eye Care	Poor vision can cause falls. See an eye doctor at least each year. Wear glasses if needed.
Medications	Many medications can cause dizziness, weakness, and poor balance. Talk with the doctor.
Changing Positions	Many people get lightheaded when standing up. Change positions slowly. Give the person time to adjust.

This Care Partner Information page is part of a series on older adult caregiving tips. They are written to help family and community caregivers, direct care workers and community health representatives care for older adults. Available in English and Spanish at www.aging.arizona.edu

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Specific Tips for Preventing Falls in People with Dementia

It is important to learn how and why the changes of dementia make falls more common. Then you will be more aware, understand what's going on, and know how to help decrease falls.

Reasons for Falls in People with Dementia	
Condition or Symptom	How it May Increase Risk of Falling & What to Do to Help
Physical Weakness	They may be frail, not able to routinely exercise, or weak from a past stroke. If able, walking regularly can help maintain strength.
Changes in Gait and Balance	They may have a shuffling walk with poor coordination. It's good if you can have someone walk with them.
Poor Judgment	They may try to walk down the steps alone, or outside on ice, or in the heat. It's good to have someone walk with them.
Trouble with Space and Vision	They may be unable to judge steps or uneven flooring. Reduce clutter and obstacles in the area. Lock or limit access to unsafe areas.
Medication Side Effects	They may be taking many medications due to cognitive or behavioral problems. Talk with the provider to reduce certain medications with side effects that can drop blood pressure, increase confusion, worsen balance, and increase fall risk.
Restlessness	Usually from aches and pains, hunger, thirst, or the need to use the bathroom. They may be unable to tell others, and get up quickly and urgently putting themselves at risk. Offer activity (moving around), food, and water regularly. If they have pain, work with the provider to treat it.
Boredom or Loneliness	They may be wandering around looking for something to do. Offer activities and arrange for visitors. Consider installing locks out of sight to reduce wandering outside.

Useful Websites

Fall Prevention Center of Excellence: <http://stopfalls.org/>

Written By: Mindy J. Fain, MD, University of Arizona Center on Aging
Alzheimer's disease and Related Dementia ~ Care Partner Information

Edited by an interprofessional team from the University of Arizona Center on Aging,
Alzheimer's Association - Desert Southwest Chapter and Community Caregivers

This project was supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number UB4HP19047, Arizona Geriatric Education Center. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

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Tips for Providing Older Adult Care

Home Safety Issues Part 2: Dementia & Fire Safety

House fires and burns are real dangers for older adults. The three big causes of house fires and burns are cooking, space heaters, and cigarettes. Always be sure there are working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors on each floor. Keep a fire extinguisher nearby that has been inspected in the last 12 months.

Safe Cooking

Many people with dementia want to live at home for as long as they can. Being able to cook is important for independence, but it has to be balanced with safety. As the dementia worsens, a person's abilities change. Therefore, it's important to check the person's abilities often to make sure they are still able to cook safely. This skill check is important to do whether the person with dementia is living alone, or with others.

Why Most People Living with Dementia Should Not Cook Alone

They may start to cook a meal and forget what they were doing.

They may leave the stove on for too many hours or overnight.

They may burn food on the stovetop and cause a fire.

They may lose sense of time and leave water boiling in a pot too long. The water may dry up completely and the pot can melt from the high heat. They may burn themselves if they don't realize how hot the pot is.

They may leave the gas on and cause an explosion.

They may forget to be careful around an open flame and severely burn themselves or start a house fire.

They may forget how to safely use a microwave and turn it on for way too long, or use metal bowls.

They may spill hot food or water on themselves.

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Small changes in the kitchen can help people living with dementia to continue to cook, and lower the risk of fires.

Tips for Safe Cooking	
Label cupboards with pictures and easy words. Buy foods that are easy to cook or prepare.	Use things that are easy to identify and are used for only one thing, such as a kettle.
Remove unsafe tools, such as very sharp knives.	Keep the kitchen well lit.
Ask the gas or electricity company to get on their “priority service register.” They will come to the home to do safety checks and teach about special safety options.	Buy appliances that switch off automatically, such as an electric kettle.

Space Heaters

People living with dementia should never use a space heater alone. Space heaters start half of all home fires in the winter months. Many models don’t have safety features. They may not automatically turn off when tipped over or when they get too hot. Also check to make sure the heater is not damaged. For example, don’t use it if the cord is worn or frayed.

Tips for Safe Use of Space Heaters
Make sure there is at least 3 feet of clear space around the heater.
Place the space heater out of walking areas so people don’t trip.
Take away the heater right away if the person living with dementia uses it for drying clothes or other unsafe activities.

Smoking

People with dementia should not smoke cigarettes when they are alone. The symptoms of dementia, such as forgetfulness and poor judgment, make it very risky.

Tips For Smoking Safety
Ask them to only smoke outside. Never allow smoking in a home or building where oxygen is in use.
Ask the person to sit in an upright chair without cushions when smoking, such as at a table.
Don’t allow them to smoke in bed.
Make sure they don’t drop hot ashes on their clothes or chair.
Don’t give them their own lighter or matches. Make sure the cigarette is put out when they are done.

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Home Safety Issues Part 3: Dementia & Guns

The combination of guns and dementia is a dangerous mix.

Many older Americans own a gun. If they develop dementia, it creates a very serious situation. People with dementia often don't realize how dangerous their guns can be. They often forget to use the basic safety procedures that they have followed for their whole life.

How does dementia affect a person's ability to safely handle guns? The table below can help explain.

Why Guns are Dangerous for People with Dementia	
Symptoms of Dementia	How it Affects Gun Safety
Memory Problems	They may forget to lock up the gun when little children are in the home.
Poor Judgment	They may use the gun on care partners or family members who might surprise them in their home or room.
Hallucinations (seeing or hearing something that isn't real)	They may use the gun on care partners or family members if they feel threatened or scared.
Depression (or other mood problems)	They may use the gun on themselves. Americans over age 65 have the highest rate of suicide.

More than 60% of people with dementia are living in a home that has guns. Care partners may not be aware that there is a gun in the home. Families may be aware, but may not realize the dangers to themselves and others as their loved one's dementia worsens.

The first step is to always ask if there is a gun in the home. The table on the next page lists questions to ask to help decide what to do.

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Questions To Ask	What To Do
Do you have guns, rifles, or other weapons in the home?	Hold a family meeting to plan what to do.
Is the gun locked and put away?	Guns should be locked and stored safely.
Is the gun loaded or unloaded?	Guns should always be unloaded.
Where are the bullets?	The bullets should be stored separately, away from the gun.
Are there children present?	Guns should not be left around children.
Does the gun owner feel depressed or down?	Guns should be hidden from people who are depressed or down because of the risk of suicide.
Does the gun owner have problems with vision or hearing?	Guns should not be used by people who have trouble hearing or seeing things.

Most of the time, the gun should be removed from the home. However, if family members feel the gun is important for their own safety, they should always keep it locked with the key hidden and the bullets kept in a separate place. Always keep the gun away from children.

Only people who have been trained in gun safety should handle a gun. Although it may seem easy to unload a gun or put it away, that is often when accidents happen. Be sure that only trained people handle guns.

Tips to Manage Guns in the Home
Always ask if there are guns or rifles in the home.
Strongly encourage the person with dementia to remove their guns from their home.
If the person with dementia can't understand the risk, then remove the guns from the home for them, or unload them.
Remember that guns are dangerous. Don't handle a gun if you haven't been trained in firearm safety.

Remember that guns can be very dangerous in the wrong hands. People with dementia do not have the ability to safely use a gun. Do not allow people with dementia to have a gun, use a gun, or even be around a gun.

Written By: Mindy J. Fain, MD, University of Arizona

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Home safety tips for older adults

A few changes could make your home easier and safer to live in and help you continue to live independently.

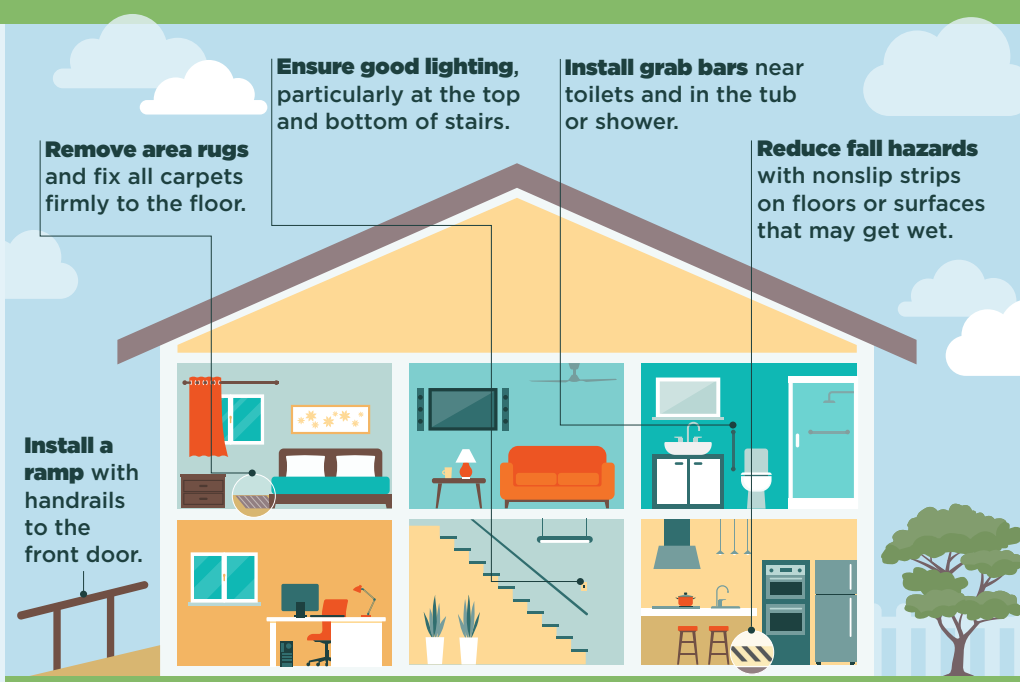
Remove area rugs and fix all carpets firmly to the floor.

Ensure good lighting, particularly at the top and bottom of stairs.

Install grab bars near toilets and in the tub or shower.

Reduce fall hazards with nonslip strips on floors or surfaces that may get wet.

Install a ramp with handrails to the front door.



For more information, visit www.nia.nih.gov/aging-in-place.



Sugerencias de seguridad en el hogar para adultos mayores

Algunos cambios podrían ayudar a que su hogar sea más fácil y seguro, y podrían facilitar que siga viviendo de manera independiente.

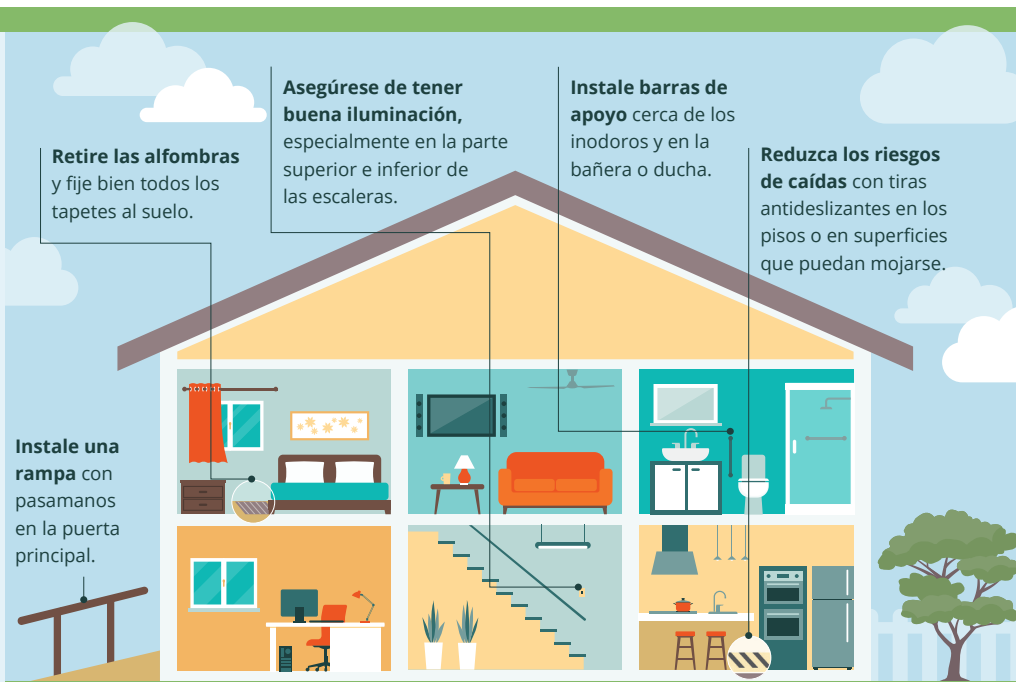
Retire las alfombras y fije bien todos los tapetes al suelo.

Asegúrese de tener buena iluminación, especialmente en la parte superior e inferior de las escaleras.

Instale barras de apoyo cerca de los inodoros y en la bañera o ducha.

Reduzca los riesgos de caídas con tiras antideslizantes en los pisos o en superficies que puedan mojarse.

Instale una rampa con pasamanos en la puerta principal.



Para más información, visite www.nia.nih.gov/envejecer-casa.

