

# Life Hacks for Living Alone: Is Technology the Answer?

**Life hack** (or **life hacking**) refers to any trick, shortcut, skill, or novelty method that increases productivity and efficiency, in all walks of life.



**WIKIPEDIA**  
The Free Encyclopedia

# Assistive Technology

product, device, or equipment, whether acquired commercially, modified or customized, that is used to maintain, increase, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities

# Ethical Considerations

- Seek person with dementia's views and consent
- Avoid unintentional harm
- Respect privacy and confidentiality
- Ensure data security
- Maintain individual's right to take risks
- Seek fair access

## Three Domains

**a. Safety** – technology aimed at keeping people with dementia safe and providing carers with support.

**b. Health** – technology aimed at supporting people with dementia to manage, assess and treat co-morbidities and improve health outcomes.

**c. Enhancing** – technology aimed at improving the quality of life for people with dementia.

Lo-tech

Hi-tech

### Falls-prevention technologies:

- **“Lo-tech”**
  - In-home modifications including:
    - Grab bars, handrails, adjustable shower heads/outlets
  
- **“Hi-tech”**
  - Sensor-based technologies
    - Wearable sensors (e.g., sensors embedded in shoes/socks)
  
    - Nonwearable sensors (sensors placed in key living spaces of home)

# Stage / Degree of Cognitive Impairment

## Early stage dementia – symptoms

Memory problems.

Difficulty in doing everyday tasks that a person could do before.

Reduced attention and concentration.

## Middle stage dementia – symptoms

Increased disorientation in time and place, with reversal in some cases of day-night cycle, so the person with dementia is awake at night.

Further reduction in short-term memory.

Difficulty in speech (finding words).

Difficulty in reading and writing.

Problems with performing tasks (apraxia).

Individual's distinct and changing needs

### Need

Identify dementia early.

Compensate loss of abilities.

Stimulate memory and cognition.

Reduce isolation and depression.

### Technology

Some automation; safety features; robotics; voice recognition; medication dispensing.

Brainteaser games or apps; life history exploration and recording tools.

Easy-to-use telephone; social media; video-calling; access to helpline.

### Need

Home safety.

Reducing distress caused by disorientation.

Dealing with more severe short-term memory loss.

### Technology

Sensors for monitoring, initiating alarms and data collection, eg bed/chair occupancy, pendant alarms, enuresis alarm, activity monitoring, GPS/GSM for navigation or locating the person outside the home.

Access control systems.

Radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology to locate items, helping to reduce crime.

How do people  
know what is  
out there?

- The Internet
- Case Managers
- Occupational Therapists
- First Responders
- Discharge Planners

## Which Technology and When?

- **Regular review of utility**
- Rent before you buy to test it out
- Are instructions easy to understand
- Is ongoing “tech support” assistance available
- Costs
- Document preferences regarding monitoring technology