



Caregiver's Answers, Topics, and Helpful Information

In an endeavor to continually assist caregivers in their search for pertinent information regarding eldercare, our Information and Referral Specialists address topics most frequently asked questions via Caregiver's Answers, Topics, and Helpful Information (CATHI). Additionally, caregivers are invited to e-mail individual questions caregiver2@senior-resources-guilford.org and an Information and Referral Specialist will reply.

Dear CATHI,

What is Assistive Technology, and Can I Use It To Care for My Loved One Who Has Dementia?

Assistive technology is intended to promote independence and safety for those with dementia or other disabilities. Assistive technology can be a great tool in relieving caregiver stress and worry. Consider the following assistive technology devices in your loved one's home.

Clocks

People with dementia may experience confusion due to an upset in the "internal body clock", causing a biological mix-up between day and night. Clocks specially designed for people with dementia that are easy-to-read can help with distinguishing time. This can also assist caregivers in establishing a routine, as they can show their loved ones what time it is.

Adaptive Telephones

It is important that our loved ones with dementia retain opportunities to communicate with others. Advancements in communication aids like the telephone have made it easier than ever to do. Adapted telephones can have frequently dialed phone numbers programmed in, have larger buttons that are easier to read, and may even have easy to understand icons installed. Video chat services such as Facetime or Skype allow our loved ones to communicate while also seeing the person they are speaking to. There are also other apps that help with communication by selecting pictures and symbols instead of having to input text.

GPS Location Devices

Often caregivers worry that they may not always know where their loved one is physically located at all times. Location and tracking devices can help put caregivers at ease. These devices can be worn by their loved ones or placed in or on a person's belongings (i.e., cell phones and automobiles). These devices

are programmed to alert caregivers when their loved one has left an area and may even alert emergency personnel to assist with a safe and speedy recovery.

Medication Management

Medication management has never been easier. Caregivers can easily purchase pill boxes that indicate the days of the week on them. Automated pill dispensers that beep and open when it's time to take medication and remind caregivers and their loved ones are another option to consider. Reminders of when to take medication can easily be programmed into adapted telephones as well! There is also a great deal of adaptive technology that has added benefits for long distance caregivers.

Smart Home Monitoring Devices and Cameras

Common smart home monitoring devices such as Google Nest allow caregivers to control the lighting, thermostat, and even access in-home cameras from their smartphone or tablet. Cameras are often focused on doors, near medication, or in the room where their loved one spends the most time. Often these cameras are motion activated and can alert caregivers when there is movement. These cameras may even allow you to speak to your loved one from afar.

Electrical Appliance Use Monitoring

This adaptive technology alerts caregivers if commonly used appliances have been turned on or off. This is made possible by plugging these appliances into a specialized power strip or outlet. This can relieve worry that devices that are dangerous to leave on, such as irons or toasters, are turned off when loved ones are finished using them.

Reminder Messages

Reminders can help caregivers and their loved ones throughout the day, especially as they establish a routine. Messages can easily be recorded on devices and set to play at appropriate times. These messages can be used to remind a person with dementia when to take their medication or that they have a doctor's appointment. Other messages could be reminders of when one leaves the home, to lock the front door.

The information in this article was adapted from "7 Technological Innovations for Those with Dementia" by alzheimers.net located at <https://www.alzheimers.net/9-22-14-technology-for-dementia>.

Note: This is for informational purposes only.

For referrals to community organizations in Guilford County that assist older adults and caregivers with these documents, contact Senior Resources of Guilford's SeniorLine at (336) 884-6981 in High Point, all other areas (336) 333-6981 or the Caregiver Support Coordinator, at (336) 373-4816 or (336) 883-3586 in High Point.

