



# Practical Strategies for People with HIV and Cognitive Impairment

This fact sheet provides practical suggestions to help people with HIV and cognitive impairment to manage better at home.

Ongoing monitoring and assessment is recommended and changes in physical and mental state should be assessed by the local doctor or health worker. You may find that as your condition changes you may need an Occupational Therapist to visit your home. Occupational therapists can assist you to make your home safe and secure and provide you with equipment to make life more comfortable.

Keep in touch with your local doctor or community health centre. They are able to offer a broad range of services, and ideas to support a person living with cognitive impairment to be as independent as possible. These services will also be able to provide you with information, referrals to other services and support.

## Some of these suggestions may help you to manage better at home:

### Home:

- clear paths of any overhanging branches etc
- remove anything that you may trip over & keep walkways clear
- leave light on at night eg. in bathroom or hallway
- leave a spare set of keys with someone you can trust
- make sure the internal doors are easy to unlock from both sides
- turn cold tap on first to avoid burns
- use a microwave to cook rather than hotplates
- have cues or signs to remind you to turn off stove
- install an automatic cut off switch for your stove
- install a fire extinguisher or fire blanket and a smoke detector

### Medication:

- use an alarm to remind you when medication is due
- write down times
- use a dosette box, ask a community nurse to assist
- blister packs can be made up from your local chemist
- Discuss other alternatives with your health worker/case manager

### Phone:

- programme useful phone numbers
- have a list of important phone numbers by the phone
- have a couple of phones eg. one in bedroom, living area., use a portable phone

## Having trouble remembering appointments?

- Keep a diary
- Use an electronic organiser/ calendar
- Use a variety of cues eg: post it notes and messages
- Make appointments at the time of day when you are your best
- Make only one appointment for the day so that you don't overload yourself
- Write down questions that you want to ask at the appointment

- Ask for a reminder call on the day of your appointment

### Write Lists:

- E.g.: shopping lists, things you have to do for the day - tick them off as you do them

### Ask your friends or family to help:

- Ask your friends and family to help you with the shopping, getting to appointments etc



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## **Cognitive Impairment & Driving:**

- A person whose driving abilities may be affected by cognitive impairment can undergo a driver assessment by an occupational therapist trained in driver rehabilitation. The assessment determines current driving skills and can recommend, for example, whether retraining of driving skills or restrictions on the driving licence are required.

## **Fatigued or tired?**

- Take breaks during the day and give yourself some time out, don't put too much pressure on yourself or overdo it.
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## **For further information:**

- The Carers Association of NSW - 1800 817 023
  - Contact your local health worker or local hospital / community centre.
  - ADAHPT - (02) 8382-1810
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