

Emergency Preparations When Dealing With Dementia

Caring for a loved one suffering with dementia is difficult enough in your normal surroundings but it can be especially difficult during emergency situations. If there is a prolonged power outage and you must deal with darkness or if you are forced to evacuate to unfamiliar surroundings due to a fire or flood, you should have a kit designed to support yourself and your loved one for several days.

Consider the following items for your **emergency kit**:

1. A 10 day minimum supply of **medicines**. To obtain an emergency supply, renew prescriptions at 24 days (for a 30 day prescription) and set aside the old pills. Start using the new supply. Repeat the next month and put the 10 “extra” pills together and mark them with the date. After a year, exchange them with new pills. Medications are usually good for one year. Don’t forget the non-prescription and denture needs. Make a list of medications and copies of prescriptions.
2. **Food and water** for a week. Store familiar types of canned goods and bottled water in a cool place and mark them with the expiration date. Replace the items and donate them or start to use them prior to the expiration date. Do not use open fires indoors to heat food.
3. A camping type battery **lantern** to provide room light. Flashlights by themselves do not last long enough or provide enough room light. Newer camping lights that use LEDs last many hours.
4. Extra changes of **clothing** (and pajamas) if your loved one’s clothes get soiled frequently.
5. Temporary **oxygen**, if required. A generator will provide longer security but operating a generator safely requires considerable training. Storing gasoline can be dangerous and the safest place to store it may be in your car’s gas tank. Use a safe siphon to refuel the generator. Generators must be outdoors with extension cords connecting the equipment. Never connect the generator to your house wiring.
6. Copies of your **Health Care Power of Attorney**, financial **Power of Attorney** and **Do Not Resuscitate** along with copies of medical insurance cards and a brief medical history for use by emergency medical personnel. Your doctor can provide this history.
7. If your loved one is a wanderer, have equipment to prevent escape and provide **a safe return**. Consider anti-burglar type hotel door locks, electronic motion detectors or open door alarms. A temporary or permanent ID bracelet should be available.
8. A car **charging cord** for your cell phone. Your cell phone can always be charged from your car battery during a long power outage or when you are away from home.
9. The **telephone numbers** of people who can be called on in an emergency to provide assistance, housing or respite care. Doctor’s telephone numbers can be useful.
10. A crank type **emergency radio** to provide emergency information and calming music.
11. Emergency **cash** since the ATMs may be out of electric power.
12. Health care and **medical supplies** such as gloves, wipes, diapers etc. and a first aid kit.
13. A **night light** or lights can illuminate unfamiliar surroundings. Tape, a marking pen and paper can be used to make signs to prevent wandering and confusion and to block stairs.