

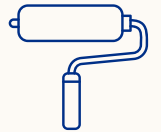
Dementia-Inclusive Resource Centre

Dementia-Friendly Design

As dementia progresses, it can affect how the person living with the condition experiences the world around them. People living with dementia may experience visuo-spatial changes, changes in depth perception, impaired reasoning and difficulty navigating spaces, which may cause environments that were once familiar to cause discomfort or new challenges.

A dementia-inclusive space is one that is designed with these symptoms in mind. It is inclusive for people living with dementia because it meets their unique needs.

The Making of our Dementia-Inclusive Resource Centre



While undergoing renovations of our office space, we were able to incorporate elements of dementia-friendly design. We wanted to create an environment that was engaging, comfortable, and easy to navigate. To do this, we planned to make movement as clear as possible, eliminate having to question what each space is used for, and answer the question of what is behind each door. We wanted to ensure that we made spaces, objects, and devices clear, familiar, easy to navigate and easy to use.

The information that follows highlights changes we made to our office, and is intended to demonstrate how simple changes that you can make at home, at work, or in your community can have a measurable impact on those living with dementia.

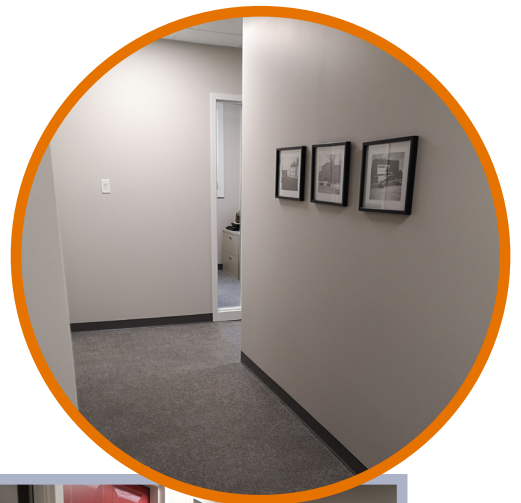
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Colour choices

Difficulties with sight and perception can cause people to misinterpret the world around them, further fuelling the confusion and isolation they're already feeling.

The use of different colours, particularly those that contrast, has been proven to make life a little easier for those living with dementia. Using colour contrasting can also assist with wayfinding. In our space, we chose a neutral wall color that could easily be contrasted with darker or lighter hues to help distinguish or camouflage certain rooms in the space, or to highlight certain objects, like the toilet seat in the washroom.



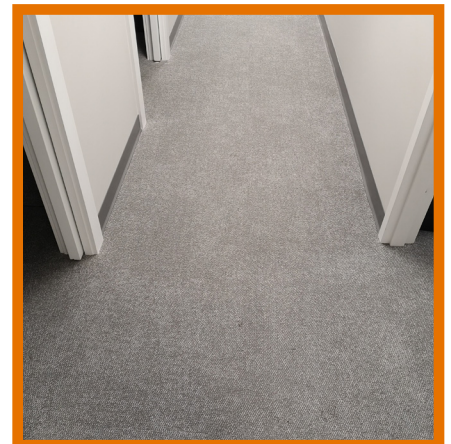
Furniture

Wherever possible, we made sure to choose furniture that clearly indicates the purpose of the space, and that is not abstract. Some more modern or abstract furniture may not clearly indicate the room's purpose.

Flooring

Reflective or shiny flooring can be very confusing for those living with dementia as these can be perceived to be wet or look like water due to spatial perception difficulties. Likewise, dark flooring or tiles can look like a hole in the floor, and speckled or patterned flooring can look like there is dirt on the floor. All of these options can cause confusion, fear, and even frustration.

For these reasons, we chose a neutral, pattern-free carpet. Another benefit of carpet is that it helps to absorb sound, and therefore help to reduce overstimulation and potential disorientation.



Signage

To aid with wayfinding and ease of navigation, we placed directional signage at all decision points to clearly identify where various rooms and spaces are within the office. The design of these signs is very intentional, and incorporates several dementia-friendly elements.

DESIGN

On all signage we chose to use a clear, literal image to help with cueing and wayfinding, a word in clear, simple text, and a directional arrow. The material of the signs is non-reflective to avoid glare. We chose the black and yellow colour combination because it is high-contrast. This makes the signs stand out from the walls, and also makes the text and images easier to see.

ROOMS

Rooms have been named based on their purpose, and to answer any questions about the purpose of the room behind each door. For spaces without a clear purpose for those who might visit our space, such as storage areas, we have not labelled these doors so as not to call attention to these rooms.

EXIT

Small exit signs have been placed on the back of each door. Because the doors are a similar colour to the walls, we wanted it to be very clear where the exit is in each room.

PLACEMENT

All signs were intentionally placed at eye-level so that they are easier to spot and easier to read.





Light-Switches

In our space, because we have push button light switches rather than the traditional toggle light switches, we decided to use a label in a highly contrasting colour indicating where the on and off positions are.

More useful links and resources

Want to learn more about dementia-friendly spaces?
Check out these resources!



[Making your home dementia friendly. Alzheimer's Society UK, 2017.](#)

This booklet is useful for people with dementia who want to remain living at home, and for friends and family members who are supporting them.



[Home safety checklist for Alzheimer's disease. National Institute on Aging \(NIH\).](#)

The NIH provides a room-by-room checklist to alert you to potential hazards for people living with dementia.



[Making your environment safe. Alzheimer Society of Canada.](#)

On this page, learn about what you need to do to make the space around you dementia-friendly and accessible, whether it's at home or in the office.

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