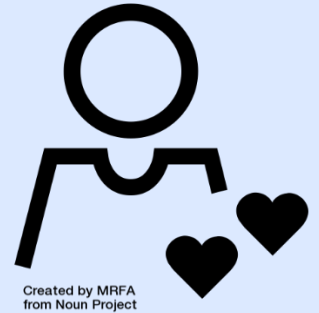


TIPS FOR PROVIDING CARE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Providing care to a family member with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia (ADRD) does not stop because of COVID-19. The uncertainty and tension resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has likely added some or a lot of distress to the care you provide.

ACCESS, Eastern Michigan University, the Alzheimer's Association, and the University of Michigan came together and created a list of tips for caregivers and loved ones of people living with dementia or Alzheimer's disease during COVID-19. While we know this list won't provide answers to all your questions, we hope you find this information helpful during this strange and ever-changing time.



Expect people living with dementia to experience some changes.

- Stress, anxiety, and changes in routine can all have a negative impact on your relative's cognition. This is usually temporary. Most people return to where they were, once things return to normal.
- If you notice big changes in your relative's cognition or functioning, call their doctor.

If someone living with dementia needs to go to the hospital during this time, make sure they and the hospital staff have a copy of:

- Your contact information
- Doctors' names and phone numbers
- List of food and drug allergies
- Copies of legal documents, like an advance directive or power of attorney
- A list of current medications and dosages
- If possible, a favorite item for your family member to bring to the hospital (e.g., book, picture, toy)

With most people staying indoors, your home may feel busier and louder than normal. Try to limit distractions and noise when possible to help your family member with dementia.

- Declutter where possible
- Decrease noise, or relocate the person to a room with less noise
- Keep the house at a comfortable temperature
- Serve meals in a quiet setting with little distraction
- Make sure your house is well lit
- Try to stay as calm as possible. People with dementia are very aware of our non-verbal communication, like tone of voice and body language. If you are calm, your loved one is more likely to be calm

While change is tough for a lot of people, it is often especially overwhelming for someone living with dementia. If your loved one seems more agitated or emotional, think about what may have triggered the behavior. Focus on feelings, not facts. Some causes may be:

- Over-stimulation
- Confusion with task
- Inadequate attention
- Pain, hunger or fear
- Depression
- Inability to understand or a misinterpretation of the environment

Find a new routine for yourself during COVID-19. Try to keep the routine of your family member similar to the routine they had prior to the pandemic.

- Wake up and go to bed at the same time every day, even on the weekends
- Set up regular, once a day phone calls or video chats with family members or friends to connect with others in meaningful ways
- Provide ample time for meals, dressing, and bathing
- Learn more about how to create a daily task for someone living with dementia here: <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/daily-care-plan>

MORE ON BACK

Many people feel more restless now because of all the time spent indoors, including people living with dementia. Here are some ideas to stay physically and mentally active every day:

- Take a walk one or two times each day with your loved one. If it's rainy, go for a drive!
- Provide structured, meaningful activities, such as going through and organizing old photographs. Break down these tasks in small, manageable chunks.
- Find activities that can be done in short bursts. People with dementia often have shorter attention spans and difficulty concentrating. Don't force them to participate, however.
- Involve the person in daily activities and chores, like folding clothes and preparing for dinner. Help your family member find a purpose every day. Humans like to feel useful!
- Activity ideas: garden together, listen to favorite music, read a short story, sing or dance, pray or read religious texts, bake, watch an old movie, work on a puzzle, clean the house together, arts and crafts, sort coins, silverware, linens, etc., look through cookbooks and chose a meal, print adult coloring pages
- Between activities, people with dementia often need breaks and rest

While taking care of yourself emotionally and physically can be difficult, by taking care of yourself, you are also taking care of your loved one.

- Ask others for emotional support
- With additional family members at home right now, ask for their help. Create a schedule or a task list for others to assist with help around the home and the care for your loved one
- Allow yourself to accept the help that is offered
- Make sure you are sleeping and eating adequately
- Allow yourself to feel good and accept your limitations during and after the pandemic
- Limit TV news

During COVID-19, it may be more important than ever to reach out for support.

- Talk to someone you trust – such as a healthcare professor, religious leader, family member, or friend. Or try a video chat technology (FaceTime, What'sApp, Skype, Zoom).
- Connect with other caregivers through a virtual caregiver support group

If your loved one is safe, allow yourself to take a break. You deserve it.

- Do something for yourself (e.g., read a book, listen to music or tv, paint, draw, write poetry)
- Call an old friend or someone you've been meaning to catch up with
- Arrange to spend time outdoors – walk around the block, ride a bike, stretch
- If you are religious or spiritual, seek support from your community
- Try a stress reduction exercise:
 - Take 10 slow, deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth
 - Try progressive muscle relaxation. Tense and relax one body part at a time, starting with your toes and slowly moving your way up to your head. Tense for about 5 seconds and relax for about 30 seconds
 - Play the 5-4-3-2-1 game to ground yourself: name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.

Remember: Every day will be different. You are doing the best you can. The care you provide makes a difference in the life of your loved one. You are not alone. It's okay to reach out for help and support:

Access support resources through the Alzheimer's Association ([alz.org/care](https://www.alz.org/care)) including online communities ([alz.org/alzconnect](https://www.alz.org/alzconnect)) and information ([alz.org/training](https://www.alz.org/training)).

Alzheimer's Association 24/7 hotline: 800-272-3900. Arabic language translations available.

Find virtual support groups and programming offered by the Alzheimer's Association [here](#).

Call ACCESS at 313-842-7010 or find them online at <https://www.accesscommunity.org> for additional information about support and program offerings.



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