



TAKE CARE OF YOU

So you can take care of them

Caring for someone with dementia is different than caring for someone with other conditions. The time, the type of care, the changing roles, and feelings of loss make dementia caregiving challenging.

Given these challenges, the best way to help your loved one is to make sure you take care of yourself first. It's important to involve your family and friends and to accept their offers of help. It's also important to talk to your doctor about thoughts of depression or stress you may feel.

Remember, as your loved one changes due to dementia, your life changes too. Things that were easy before might be harder now. It's important to adjust what you expect from yourself and your loved one. Be patient and kind to yourself during these changes.



➔ Build routines

Routines are important for those with dementia, especially for meals and sleep. Encourage healthy eating, even if they crave sugary foods.

Sleep changes can be challenging, and nighttime caregiving can be tiring. To reduce stress and boost energy for both you and your loved one, engage in activities like walking and easy exercises.

➔ Changing roles



Your role will change and the person you love will change, although they may look the same and even seem the same at times.

Understanding what these changes will be can help you and your family member cope with your new situation.

➔ Communication



Behavior is communication. Try to understand new behaviors to learn how to respond. Consider if a new behavior is trying to tell you something. Try not to: Argue, surprise them or talk or move quickly. Try to: Speak slowly. Agree with them, even if it's not true. Make sure they see you before touching them or speaking.

➔ Misunderstandings



As dementia gets worse, it affects the caregiver more. The family member may not realize how their actions or words could harm others. Observe your family and try to understand their reasons. Pay attention to your non-verbal actions like facial expression and how you sit or stand.

➔ Physical tasks



Helping a family member with dementia often means doing physical tasks. It's important to learn the right way to lift and help them stand to avoid injuring yourself.

CARING FOR A FAMILY MEMBER WITH DEMENTIA

Dementia affects logic, perception, attention, memory, mood, communication skills, knowledge and behavior. Here are more strategies for caring for a family member with dementia and a link to a video training session about caregiving.



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➔ Anxiety and Aggression



Anxiety and aggression often increase. Medications the person is already taking may affect their dementia behaviors. Always discuss with a doctor any medications the person is taking. Be aware of mirrors in the home.

People with dementia may not recognize themselves in a mirror. Mirrors may cause problems and increase anxiety in the family member. One way to decrease anxiety is to include the person with dementia in activities and daily life. Their natural desire to be included and to have fulfillment does not go away.

➔ Sleep



Alzheimer's disease and other dementia cause changes to a person's sleep schedule. Your family member may wake up more at night and stay awake at night longer.

Some things you can do to help sleep are to try to build exercise into your family member's daily routines. Rely on nature and sunlight and try to reduce the amount of light in the home in the evening. Do not watch TV before bed or have a TV on during sleep. Talk to a healthcare provider about sleep problems.

➔ Music and Memory



Music is a powerful tool for releasing stress and anxiety. Play the person's favorite music and talk to them about the past and things that happened related to the music they love.

➔ Respite Care



It is so important to have breaks and time off. If you have someone who can care for your family member, find times to do that. Look for adult respite care places too.

Cafe's de la memoria are a safe space for people to talk to others and give a break for both family members and a structure to the day.

➔ Wandering



A person could wander away for many reasons, it does not always mean they are angry or sad. Some ways to avoid wandering away from home are: exercises to help them feel comfortable at home.

Having a home security system on the door is better than locking the doors. When a person wants to leave, try to calm them down and distract them than tell them not to leave.

These tips are from a Wisconsin Department of Health Services video about caring for a family member with dementia. The 80-minute video is posted in Spanish and English. Watch it by scanning this QR code.



DHS on Vimeo
go.wisc.edu/ks415q