



DEMENTIA CAREGIVING DURING COVID-19

There are so many “unknowns” when it comes to COVID-19 and that also applies to those with a memory impairment. It’s unknown how long the pandemic will last, and it’s unknown if they will be affected long-term by the current lack of normalcy. Caring for a person with dementia or Alzheimer’s is challenging already and it is important to keep care as “normal” as possible. These tips will help to keep the important things top of mind.

1 SAFE HYGIENE: Show your loved one the essentials of hand washing. Put friendly reminders up by the sink and in the bathroom to prompt them. Show by example; wear your own mask when there is a risk of contact with others and explain in simple terms why they need to wear one too. Keep high contact areas disinfected as much as possible.

2 MEDICAL CARE: You are very likely in a position where you have to manage your person’s routine and chronic health care as well as to respond to changes in condition or react in an emergency situation. It’s important to recognize that, with COVID-19, you need to have a plan for how to handle some medical situations that might arise in the course of caregiving.

- If you have a primary care provider, contact the office to see what procedures are in place for handling routine visits.
- Find out how they recommend the handling chronic care situations that you’d usually manage by bringing the person to the office.
- Learn how to emergency situations – should you call the office first? Go directly to an Emergency Department?

3 POSITIVITY: If you are caring for someone from outside their home be sure to come in with a positive mindset. Don’t allude to any stresses that may be happening in the outside world. By doing that for them, it will also help you to avoid focusing on it. Limit news on the television and social media. Find ways to redirect in a positive light. Depending on the extent of their dementia or Alzheimer’s, they only need to know what they can retain or comprehend. Keep details simple and light to help any extra anxiety and stress.

4 ROUTINE: Structure helps those with a cognitive impairment thrive, but the stay at home order has thrown these routines off. It is crucial to keep things as normal as possible. Remember what times of day the person functions best. Stay on track with meal times, bathing, dressing and regular times for waking up and going to bed. Replace past activities to create a ‘new normal’. Create at home activities that can engage your loved one. Are there ways to repeat such activities over the course of a day? If the person enjoys helping fold the laundry, could you bring out a drawer full to let them reorganize? Try new things out and add those that work as a normal part of your schedule.

5 LOW-RISK OUTINGS: You can still safely get yourself and your loved one out of the house. Taking them to a park to get fresh air or for a car ride can improve mood and break up monotony.

6 MANAGE SOCIAL DISTANCING: If your loved one is used to interacting with people on a regular basis be sure to implement suitable tools to continue this communication. If it is possible, set up a regular video chat, telephone call or email from family and friends.

7 TAKE A BREAK: Be kind to yourself and make sure you take a break if you become overwhelmed or sick yourself. Reach out and talk to someone. Research online support groups and ways to connect with other caregivers. Set time aside to chat with your family and friends whether over the phone or through video chat. If it gets to be too much, know it is ok to have a family member or caregiver come in to help.

RESOURCES: The Alzheimer’s Foundation of America has a FREE helpline 24/7 at 800-272-3900. The Caregiver Action Network has a FREE help desk that is available daily 8:00 AM - 7:00 PM at 855-227-3640 if you need to talk. If you would like more information, please contact Inspir Carnegie Hill. Our knowledgeable staff of professionals understands and is here for you throughout the journey.

