



## Mealtimes

A person with dementia may find it difficult to concentrate or feed themselves during mealtimes. Some tips:

- Support choice making by offering two food choices; ask "Do you want this or that?"
- Minimise external noise and distraction (e.g. turn off television, radio, computer).
- Use solid-coloured utensils, rather than those with decorations, to minimise distractions.
- Keep away unused utensils. Serve only one food at a time while following the pace of person with dementia.
- Cut the food into bite-sized pieces and encourage frequent small meals.
- Give step-by-step instructions to facilitate self-feeding, for example, "Pick up your spoon," "Scoop rice on your spoon", etc.

## WHERE TO SEEK HELP?

**Agency for Integrated Care (Singapore Silver Line)**  
Tel: 1800 650 6060 (all services available)  
Website: [www.aic.sg](http://www.aic.sg)

**ComCare Helpline**  
Tel: 1800 222 0000 (Financial, Linkage of Services)

**Dementia Helpline**  
Tel: 6377 0700 (Management of the Dementia, Caregiver Support Service, Training and Dementia Day Centre)  
Website: <https://dementia.org.sg/>  
Email: [info@dementia.org.sg](mailto:info@dementia.org.sg)

**Institute of Mental Health**  
Tel: 6389 2222 (Main Line)  
Website: [www.imh.com.sg](http://www.imh.com.sg)

**Khoo Teck Puat Hospital**  
Tel: 6555 8000 (Caregiver Support Group)  
Email: [ktph.memorycare@alexandrahealth.com.sg](mailto:ktph.memorycare@alexandrahealth.com.sg)  
(Dementia Support Group)

**Seniors Helpline**  
Tel: 1800 555 5555

**Tsao Foundation Hua Mei Training Academy**  
Tel: 9656 8273 (Call/WhatsApp)  
Website: [www.tsaofoundation.org](http://www.tsaofoundation.org)

**TOUCH Caregivers Support Care Line**  
Tel: 6804 6555

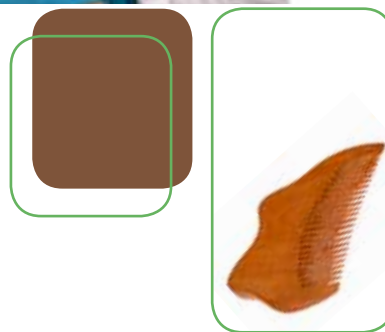
## OUTREACH SERVICES

### Home-based Psychogeriatric Services

- Aged Psychiatry Community Assessment & Treatment Service (APCATS)**  
Coverage: Central, North-West and South-West CDC Districts  
Tel: 6389 2175  
Email: [apcats@imh.com.sg](mailto:apcats@imh.com.sg)
- Community Psychogeriatric Programme (CPGP – CGH)**  
Coverage: North-East and South-East CDC Districts  
Tel: 6936 6880 / 6936 5793  
Email: [CPGP@cgh.com.sg](mailto:CPGP@cgh.com.sg)
- Geriatric Psychiatry Out-Reach Assessment, Consultation and Enablement (G-RACE – NUH)**  
Coverage: Western Region of Singapore  
Tel: 6908 2222  
Email: [g\\_race@nuhs.edu.sg](mailto:g_race@nuhs.edu.sg)



## Caring for Persons with DEMENTIA



## CARING TIPS

*Caring for a person with dementia can be challenging. The following tips are specially designed to help caregivers of persons with dementia.*



## Toileting

A person with dementia may have trouble finding the toilet, being aware and regulating urges.

- Watch for signs that he/she has the urge to pass urine or motion (e.g. wandering about or pulling at the zipper of his trousers).
- Establish a regular schedule for taking the person to the toilet, e.g. two-hour intervals and adjust the intervals as necessary.
- Turn on nightlights in the bedrooms, hallways and bathroom.
- Put on bright coloured wallpaper on the bathroom door or put an eye-catching sign on it.
- Use incontinence aids, such as protective bedding, adult diapers, pads, bedside commode or urinal if the person has problem getting to the toilet alone at night.
- Wear clothing that is easy to put on/remove (e.g. elastic pants).
- Do not rush, help the person relax by giving the person enough time to use the toilet.
- To prevent constipation, ensure that he/she takes enough fluids and fibre (fruits and vegetables). Ensure he/she drinks at least 6-8 glasses of water per day unless advised otherwise by the doctor. Dehydration can also worsen the symptoms of dementia.
- Limit fluids after dinner to minimise night time urination, in order to maintain a good night's sleep.
- If the person has any incontinence problems, have a doctor evaluate his/her condition.
- Keep the skin around the groin clean and dry. Apply a barrier cream if the person with dementia wears diapers for his/her incontinence.
- If accidents occur during toileting, stay calm and do not scold or embarrass the person.



## Bathing

Bathing can be an overwhelming activity for persons with dementia.

- Have everything you need before bathing. Prepare a bath towel and change of clothes beforehand.
- Turn on the tap and check the water temperature with your hand, then check with him/her if that is the preferred temperature.
- Ask which part of their body would they want to begin showering by giving two options e.g. "Do you want to start with the feet or head?"
- Keep to the person's previous schedule of bathing and grooming.
- If he/she seems embarrassed while bathing, wrap a towel around his shoulders or waist to provide warmth and a sense of privacy.
- Be flexible. Use a sponge bath in the bedroom if showering upsets the person.
- Install grab bars or use a shower chair.
- Give the person enough time for bathing.
- Prepare the person before every step, for example: "I am going to wash your hair now."
- Give step-by-step instructions to facilitate participation in showering e.g. applying soap on their body by themselves.

## Dressing

A person with dementia should be encouraged to continue to dress himself/herself for as long as he/she is able to.

- Choose clothing that is comfortable and easy to wash or put on (e.g. elastic waistbands and Velcro fasteners for shoes). This will also help if the person has incontinence.
- Avoid accessories, such as belts or scarves, which are difficult to put on, to avoid confusion.
- Lay clothes in the order that they should be put on. Put unneeded clothing out of sight.
- Use numbers or pictures to label clothing drawers.
- Allow him/her to choose his/her clothes by offering two options.
- Provide step-by-step instructions to facilitate dressing. Give the person ample time to dress up.



## Grooming

A person with dementia should be presentable at all times. Hence, it is important to carry out regular grooming.

- Place brush and comb in clear view.
- Ensure adequate lighting and avoid lighting that casts shadows, which might cause the person to see things that are not there.
- Brush the person's teeth or clean his/her dentures daily. Ensure that he/she visits the dentist regularly.
- Brush the outside of his/her teeth if the person refuses to open his/her mouth.
- Use oral swabs or no alcohol total care mouthwash if the person tends to swallow toothpaste.
- Trim and clean his/her toes and fingernails.
- Cut the person's hair short, such that it requires little care.
- Be flexible and allow the person to do what he/she can or likes to do while you provide any support or assistance needed.

## Social Interaction

Social interaction helps the person with dementia feel included and engaged.

- Do not force the person to interact with others, but encourage him/her to be as socially active as possible.
- Encourage participation in a non-demanding task or job; or in simple activities that he/she enjoyed in the past.
- Support their attempts to express themselves e.g. by allowing a longer time to respond.
- Create opportunities for quality time e.g. doing massages, flipping old photographs together or just quietly sitting next to each other.
- Observe their attention span and plan activities that are within their attention span. Allow breaks in between if fatigue is observed.

## Sleeping

A person with dementia may experience sleep disturbances.

- Try to keep a consistent routine for going to bed.
- Avoid daytime naps if the person is not sleeping through the night.
- Avoid caffeine in all forms, if possible.
- Have an activity schedule in the day to make use of excess energy.
- Make sure the person has used the bathroom before going to bed.
- Have a wind-down routine, preferably to wind down one to two hours before bedtime e.g. listening to soft music, changing into pyjamas.
- Consult the doctor for medication as a last resort if the person cannot sleep at night.



## General Principles in Dementia Care

People with dementia can exhibit difficult behaviours because of changes within the brain. The suggestions listed below are some tips to help the caregiver cope and to ensure the patient's safety, dignity and independence are maintained as far as possible.

- Do not expect the person to remember as this will frustrate him/her.
- When the person with dementia becomes agitated or displays a difficult behaviour, respond calmly and validate their feelings.
- Simplify activities and communication. Break activities down into simple, step-by-step tasks. This will help the person with dementia focus on one step at a time to complete the activity. Even if it takes longer and the person makes a mess, it is better to allow him/her to do as much for himself/herself as

possible. This will give him/her dignity, independence and maintain his/her abilities for as long as possible.

- Create routines and a consistent plan for each day, including what time to get up and to take meals. Taking part in activities helps decrease anxiety and promotes a sense of comfort for the person with dementia.
- Do not argue with the person with dementia. Try to see things from their perspectives.
- Identify and remove visual cues related to the challenging behaviour (i.e. if the person wants to go outside every time he/she sees shoes at the door, remove the shoes).
- When the person demonstrates a new or difficult behaviour, try to find out if he/she is uncomfortable (e.g. too hot or tired, or needs to go to the toilet). If he/she seems uncomfortable, the behaviour may be related to a medical problem, such as an infection, medication side effects, etc). Have him/her evaluated by a doctor if you cannot find the cause of his/her new behaviour, such as restlessness, agitation, irritability and/or physical aggression.
- Daily exercise. Make sure the person has an opportunity to have exercise every day e.g. bringing their used plates and walking to the sink. Physical exercise helps to strengthen muscle tone and improves balance and coordination, thus decreasing the risk of falling. It will be helpful if they are able to follow simple instructions and enjoy physical exercise e.g. walking outdoors for 20 minutes daily, Qigong, Tai Qi, ball games.
- Maintain social activities. Social activities help persons with dementia stay in touch with other people (such as family, friends and neighbours), giving them a sense of well-being.
- Offer reassurance and praise. This will boost the person's self-esteem and reinforce appropriate behaviour.



## Activities for Persons With Dementia

Engage the person with dementia in simple chores, such as sorting buttons, simple sewing, plucking vegetables, folding clothes, sweeping the floor, etc.

## Adapting The Home Environment

Ensure that the person's home environment is safe and secure. A calm, quiet, simple, yet familiar home environment is the best. Do not leave the television or radio on all the time.

Remove any objects which could cause injury, such as clutter or toys left on the floor. Use adaptive equipment, such as grab bars or ramps, to make it easier for the person to get around.

### In the Kitchen

Lock up cleaning supplies. Hide knives and other utensils. Store small appliances e.g. toaster and blender. Unplug larger appliances, such as the microwave.

### In the Bathroom

Install grab bars. Add textured stickers or mats to slippery surfaces. Supervise the use of hair dryers, electric and hand razors. Remove locks from the bathroom door.

### In the Bedroom

Install nightlights between the bedroom and bathroom. Consider placing a commode chair or potty by the bed.

### In the Utility Area

Lock up hand and power tools, such as drills. Lock up poisonous chemicals, such as paints, cleaning agents and fertilisers.

### Throughout the Home

Hide keys. Disguise outdoor locks or install dead bolts. Remove or tape down rugs and carpeting. Apply coloured stickers to large windows and sliding glass doors. Remove poisonous plants. Create an even level of lighting near doorways, stairways, and between rooms. Remove objects that block walking paths.

If the person is prone to wandering, alarms on doors could help. Another idea would be to cover doors that lead outside with a mural that looks like a bookcase or even a simple stop sign, which is easily deciphered by a person with dementia. A small black area rug in front of a door may appear to be a black hole to persons with dementia, and they may be deterred from using that door.