



Mealtimes

A person with dementia may experience stress during meal times. Some tips:

- Bring the person to the toilet before each meal.
- Minimise external noise and distraction (e.g. turn off television, radio, computer).
- Use solid-coloured utensils, rather than those with decorations, to minimise distractions.
- Use a bowl, instead of a plate, to prevent spills.
- Give only one utensil and serve only one food at a time, so that the person won't need to decide what and how to eat.
- Cut the food into bite-sized pieces and give the person a smaller spoon to encourage him to take smaller bites.
- Tell the person what to do one step at a time, for example: "Pick up your spoon," "Scoop rice on your spoon," etc.
- Don't argue with the person suffering from dementia, find a distraction instead. For example, tell him to complete an activity with you first. The activity will divert attention away from eating.

WHERE TO SEEK HELP?

Agency for Integrated Care (Singapore Silver Line)
Tel: 1800 650 6060 (all services available)
Website: 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: www.alz.org.sg
Email: infocsc@alz.org.sg

Institute of Mental Health
Tel: 6389 2222 (Main Line)
Website: www.imh.com.sg

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

Seniors Helpline
Tel: 1800 555 5555

Tsao Foundation Hua Mei Training Centre
Tel: 6471 7740 (Training and Services)
Website: www.tsaofoundation.org

TOUCH Caregiver Centre Helpline
Tel: 1800 352 1622 (Management of Nursing and Physical)

OUTREACH SERVICES

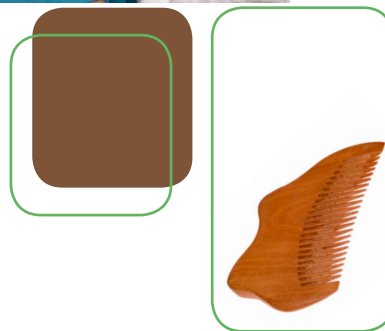
Home-based Psychogeriatric Services

- Aged Psychiatry Community Assessment & Treatment Service (APCATS)**
Coverage: Central, North-West and South-West CDC Districts
Tel: 6389 2175
Email: apcats@imh.com.sg
- Community Psychogeriatric Programme (CPGP – CGH)**
Coverage: North-East and South-East CDC Districts
Tel: 6426 7504 / 6426 7506
Email: CPGP@cgh.com.sg
- Geriatric Psychiatry Out-Reach Assessment, Consultation and Enablement (G-RACE – NUH)
Coverage: Western Region of Singapore
Tel: 6779 5555
Email: g_race@nuhs.edu.sg

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Caring for Persons with DEMENTIA



CARING TIPS

Caring for a person with memory loss and confusion can be stressful and exhausting. The following tips are specially designed to help caregivers of persons with dementia.



Toileting

A person with dementia may have trouble remembering what to do when the urge to pass urine/motion occurs.

- Watch for signs that he 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. Bring him to the toilet the first thing in the morning, before and after meals, after activities and before bed. Start with two-hour intervals and adjust the intervals as necessary.
- Turn on nightlights in the bedrooms, hallways and bathroom.
- Place a commode chair or potty by the bedside if the person has problems getting to the toilet alone at night.
- Use bright colours to paint the bathroom door or put an eye-catching sign on it.
- Use incontinence aids, such as protective bedding, adult diapers, pads or urinals, if necessary.
- Wear clothing that is easy to put on/remove (e.g. elastic pants).
- Give the person enough time to use the toilet.
- To prevent constipation, ensure that he takes enough fluids and fibre (fruits and vegetables). Dehydration can also worsen the symptoms of dementia. Ensure he drinks at least 6-8 glasses of water per day unless advised otherwise by the doctor. Provide one serving of fruit and vegetables during each meal.
- Limit fluids after dinner.
- If the person has any incontinence problems, have a doctor evaluate his condition.
- Keep the skin around the groin clean and dry. Apply a barrier cream if the person with dementia wears diapers for his incontinence.
- If accidents occur during toileting, stay calm and do not scold or embarrass the person.



Bathing

A person with dementia may refuse to bathe. He / she may feel that bathing has become too complicated a task to perform.

- 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.
- Keep to the person's previous schedule of bathing and grooming.
- If he 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 handrails 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."
- Be calm and gentle, yet firm. Avoid distractions or discussions. It is best to focus on the task at hand.

Dressing

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

- Choose clothing that is comfortable, washable and easy to 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.
- Use numbers or pictures to label clothing drawers.
- Allow him to choose his clothes, but limit choices to 2 or 3 to minimise confusion.
- 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 dentures daily. Ensure that he visits the dentist regularly.
- Brush the outside of his teeth if the person refuses to open his mouth.
- Trim and clean his 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 can or likes to do while you provide any support or assistance needed.

Social Interaction

A person with dementia, especially in the early stages, may go through bouts of depression, as they begin to realise that their personalities and lives are changing. Social interaction during these early stages can sometimes ward off depression and be stimulating.

- Do not force the person to interact with others, but encourage him to be as socially active as possible.
- Encourage participation in a non-demanding task or job; or in simple activities that he has enjoyed in the past.
- Seek counsel from a support group designed specifically for the person with dementia to give him a chance to talk to others who are going through the same types of changes and are experiencing the same emotions.

Sleeping

A person with dementia may experience sleep-wake cycle disturbance. Restlessness and sleeplessness at night are common and can be stressful for the caregiver.

- 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.
- Make use of excess energy by doing some exercises every day.
- Make sure the person has used the bathroom before going to bed.
- Consult the doctor for medication as a last resort if the person cannot sleep at night.



General Principles in Dementia Care

People with memory loss and confusion can exhibit difficult behaviour because of the 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 is maintained as far as possible.

- Do not expect the person to remember, as this will frustrate him.
- When the elder becomes agitated or displays a difficult behaviour, try to distract him with another activity.
- 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 to do as much for himself as possible. This will give him dignity, independence and maintain his 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. His reality is not yours.
- Identify and remove triggers to behaviour (i.e. if the person wants to go outside every time he sees shoes at the door, remove the shoes).
- When the person demonstrates a new or difficult behaviour, try to find out if he is uncomfortable (e.g. too hot or tired, or needs to go to the toilet). If he seems uncomfortable, the behaviour may be related to a medical problem, such as an infection, medication side effects, etc). Have him evaluated by a doctor if you cannot find the cause of his new behaviour, such as restlessness, agitation, irritability and/or physical aggression.
- Daily exercise. Make sure the person has an opportunity to have exercise everyday. Physical exercise helps to strengthen muscle tone and improves balance and coordination, thus decreasing the risk of falling. For example, physical exercise, such as walking outdoors for 20 minutes daily, Qigong, Tai Qi, ball games, etc. will be helpful if the person is still able to follow simple instructions.
- Maintain social activities. Social activities help the person 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 patient'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, such as the toaster and blender. Unplug larger appliances, such as the microwave.

In the Bathroom

Set the water temperature to 49°C or lower. 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 elder 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 elders with dementia, and they may be deterred from using that door.