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.

**CARING TIPS**

### Grooming

- **Mealtimes**
  - A person with dementia may experience stress during meal times. Some tips:
    - a. Bring the person to the toilet before each meal.
    - b. Minimise external noise and distraction (e.g. turn off television, radio, computer).
    - c. Use solid-colored utensils, rather than those with decorations, to minimise distractions.
    - d. Use a bowl, instead of a plate, to prevent spills.
    - e. 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.
    - f. Cut the food into bite-sized pieces and give the person a smaller spoon to encourage him to take smaller bites.
    - g. Tell the person what to do one step at a time, for example: “Pick up your spoon,” “Scoop rice on your spoon,” etc.
    - h. 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.

### Toileting

- A person with dementia may have trouble remembering what to do when the urge to pass urine or motion occurs.
  - a. 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).
  - b. 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.
  - c. Turn on nightlights in the bedrooms, hallways and bathroom.
  - d. Place a commode chair or potty by the bedside if the person has problems getting to the toilet alone at night.
  - e. Use bright colours to paint the bathroom door or put an eye-catching sign on it.
  - f. Use incontinence aids, such as protective bedding, adult diapers, pads or pants, if necessary.
  - g. Wear clothing that is easy to put on/remove (e.g. elastic pants).
  - h. Give the person enough time to use the toilet.
  - i. 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.
  - j. Limit fluids after dinner.
  - k. If the person has any incontinence problems, have a doctor evaluate his condition.
  - l. Keep the skin around the groin clean and dry. Apply a barrier cream if the person with dementia wears diapers for his incontinence.
  - m. If accidents occur during toileting, stay calm and do not scold or embarrass the person.
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 work off depression and be stimulating.

- Avoid barriers, such as belts or screens, which are difficult to put on, to avoid confusion.
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- Use simple instructions.

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 adopt another activity.
- Encourage participation in a non-demanding task or job; or in simple activities that he has enjoyed in the past.
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Adapting The Home Environment

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

Activities for Persons With Dementia

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

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