

62 Tips on Caring for a Loved One with Dementia



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INTRODUCTION

Caring for a loved one with dementia is an act of love that can be overwhelming at times. As dementia progresses, your loved one becomes increasingly dependent on you for their daily needs.

Our dementia caregiver tips include practical advice on how to help someone with dementia daily, such as keeping your loved one safe, managing behavior, minimizing agitation, reducing sundowning, caring for hygiene needs, managing meals, and more. We also provide tips for caring for yourself and finding resources so you do not have to do it alone.

Keeping Your Loved One Safe

Dementia can cause disorientation, unusual behaviors, and physical limitations that increase your loved one's risk of injury. An effective safety plan should include the following actions:

- Provide 24-hour supervision
- Block access to hazards within the home.
- Prepare for emergencies.
- Remove fall hazards.
- Do not let your loved one drive.



Managing Dementia-Related Behaviors

People with dementia respond to caregivers and their environment in ways that may be hard to understand. Their bathroom habits may change. They may resist your help and make statements that do not make sense to you. The following tips can help you cope with common dementia-related behaviors:

- Maintain a structured, predictable routine.
- Develop a toilet schedule.
- Accommodate rather than control.
- Participate in your loved one's reality.



Minimizing Agitation and Anxiety

Agitation, anxiety, and aggression in a loved one with dementia may stem from pain, hunger, thirst, infections, medications, and difficulty expressing themselves. Confusion and loss of control can contribute to these responses. You may be able to minimize negative emotions and aggression by doing the following:

- Avoid overstimulation.
- Maintain a routine.
- Avoid substances that increase agitation.
- Maintain a soothing environment.
- Provide gentle massages.
- Provide exercise opportunities.
- Avoid forceful solutions.
- Avoid arguing.

Handling Duplicate Conversations and Questions

Your loved one may forget conversations within moments and either bring up something they just told you or ask a question you had already answered. It is important to note that there is usually nothing you can say to jog their memory, and it could create embarrassment, agitation, and anxiety in your loved one. The following dementia caregiver tips describe the best ways to handle duplicate conversations and questions:

- Answer questions simply without elaborating.
- Redirect your loved one to an activity or start singing a familiar song.

- Wait to discuss plans until just before the event.
- Create signs that answer frequently asked questions and hang them in relevant areas throughout the house.
- Identify behaviors that indicate needs, such as pulling on clothing when they need to use the restroom.

Coping with Delusions, Suspicion, and Paranoia

Brain changes and memory loss alter your loved one's information-processing abilities and perceptions of others. If your loved one becomes suspicious of you, the following tips can help you cope and may ease your loved one's concerns:

- Do not take it personally.
- Avoid giving them money.
- Be aware of their hiding places.
- Avoid arguing.
- Warn other caregivers and loved ones.
- Use verbal and non-verbal reassurances.



Minimizing Sundowning

Sundowning occurs when someone with dementia experiences an increase in confusion and agitation late in the day. They may become aggressive, ignore directions, or attempt to wander away. The following tips may minimize sundowning:

- Increase daytime activities.
- Expose your loved one to sunlight frequently.
- Minimize daytime napping.
- Provide proper late-day nutrition.
- Establish a calming bedtime routine.
- Prevent shadows.

Managing Meals

As dementia progresses, eating can become increasingly challenging for your loved one. The following tips will help you make the most of every opportunity:

- Establish a routine.
- Feed your loved one when they are hungry.
- Provide peaceful, quiet meals.
- Encourage independence. Supervise.
- Note decreased food consumption. Serve nutritious foods.

Caring for Your Loved One's Hygiene Needs

Your loved one may lose the ability to perceive when they need to use the restroom and may not remember how to wash their hair or body. The following tips can help you keep your loved one clean and protect their dignity:

- Maintain a routine.
- Provide towels and clothing for bathing.
- Provide safety features.
- Provide supervision.
- Wash hair separately.
- Consider a sponge bath.

Choosing the Best Clothing for Your Loved One

The wrong clothing could cause your loved one to feel trapped or constricted, and some clothing may be too difficult for them to put on. You can ensure your loved one's clothing is safe, appropriate, and comfortable by doing the following:

- Provide accommodating clothing.
- Establish a clothing selection routine.
- Reduce conflicts about the same outfit.
- Make it hard to undress if necessary.



Taking Care of Yourself While Caring for Your Loved One

Caring for a loved one with dementia is a 24-hour job. Without appropriate self-care, you can become burned out or malnourished. You cannot provide the quality of care you desire if your mental and physical health suffers. You can take care of yourself and your loved one by doing the following:

- Put your needs first.
- Get help.
- Join support groups.
- Take time to care for your physical needs.
- Get some alone time.
- Maintain a sense of humor.

Managing Your Loved One's Legal Affairs

If your loved one is newly diagnosed with dementia, take care of legal matters while they can still understand legal documents. Once their dementia progresses and they lose that capacity, your loved one cannot legally sign documents. You will need to do the following:

- Prepare and Execute a Durable Power of Attorney and Advance Directives.
- Designate a spokesperson.
- Copy documents.

Additional Resources for Caregivers of People with Dementia

You do not have to go through this alone. Most communities offer multiple resources for caregivers of people with dementia. We recommend the following:

- The 36-Hour Day by Mace & Rabins
- Area Agency on Aging for your area
- The local chapter of the Alzheimer's Association
- California Caregiver Resource Center
- Family Care Navigator
- Lanza Morgan, LLP

Placing Your Loved One in a Nursing Home

The following tips can help you choose a safe nursing home for your loved one:

- Visit each facility you are considering.
- Check each nursing home's ratings.

Contact a Lawyer If You Suspect Neglect or Abuse

We are one of the nation's leading elder abuse law firms. If you suspect your loved one has experienced neglect or abuse in a nursing home, our experienced California nursing home abuse lawyers can protect your rights, investigate your claim, and seek to hold the facility accountable.

Contact us online today or call 1 (888) 887-9777 to schedule a free consultation.