Increasing Support for Caregivers and People Living with Dementia in the Time of COVID-19

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Agenda

1. Dementia & COVID-19
2. Care Considerations
3. Alzheimer’s Association Resources
Defining Alzheimer’s & Dementia

- “Dementia” serves as an umbrella term, describing symptoms.
- Alzheimer’s is the most common cause/form of dementia
- Other forms of dementia include:
  - Vascular Dementia
  - Lewy Body Disease
  - Frontotemporal Degeneration
  - Parkinson’s Dementia
Facts and Figures: 2021

• More than 6 million Americans are living with Alzheimer’s
• Nearly two-thirds of those with Alzheimer’s - 3.8 million - are women
• More than 11 million Americans provide unpaid care for people with Alzheimer’s or other dementia
• Older Black Americans are 2x as likely to have Alzheimer’s or other dementia than White Americans
COVID-19 and Dementia

- Alzheimer’s and dementia deaths increased 16% during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The risk of contracting COVID-19 was twice as high for people living with dementia than those without it.
- Vaccination: recommended, with input from an individual’s physician.
Response and Service Delivery

• Creation of new tips and guidance for caregivers
• All in-person events shifted to virtual format
  – Support Groups, Social Engagement Programs, Education Programs, Fundraising Events, etc.
• Helpline staff utilize creative problem-solving in the absence of traditional caregiver supports
• Emphasis on existing web-based resources
Coronavirus (COVID-19): Tips for Dementia Caregivers

Most likely, dementia does not increase risk for COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the new coronavirus, just like dementia does not increase risk for flu. However, dementia-related behaviors, increased age and common health conditions that often accompany dementia may increase risk.

For example, people with Alzheimer’s disease and all other dementia may forget to wash their hands or take other recommended precautions to prevent illness. In addition, diseases like COVID-19 and the flu may worsen cognitive impairment due to dementia.

- **Tips for dementia caregivers at home**
- **Tips for caregivers of individuals in assisted living**
- **Tips for individuals receiving home-based services**
- **Residential facility has an incidence of COVID-19**
- **Staying healthy**
Tips for Caregivers of Individuals in Residential Care

- Environmental safety measures
  - Masks, Social distancing, hand-washing

- Consider your loved one’s habits/level of comfort
  - If in-person visits are not feasible, consider alternatives which may align with previously-established routine
Tips for Caregivers using Home-Based Services

- Ask the provider to explain their protocols to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Anyone with a temperature over 100.4°F should be excluded from providing care.
- If the worker has been exposed to anyone who has tested positive, do not allow them into your home.

- Ensure that the health care professional washes their hands upon arrival and regularly throughout their time in your home.
- Ask the health care professional to wear a mask.
- Be aware that bringing anyone into your home increases the risk of spreading COVID-19, even if CDC guidance is followed.
Tips for Caregivers at Home

Follow CDC Guidelines, and consider the following:

Individuals living with dementia may need support to remember important hygienic practices:

• Consider placing signs as a reminder to wash hands with soap for 20 seconds
• Demonstrate thorough hand-washing
• Hand sanitizer (minimum 60% alcohol) can be alternative if someone cannot get to sink or wash hands easily
Tips for Caregivers at Home

• If rapid increase in confusion occurs, contact health care provider
• Request prescriptions for greater number of days
• Make alternative plans for adult day care, respite, etc.
• Make alternative plans if primary caregiver becomes ill
Activities at Home

www.alz.org/care

- Create a simple daily plan
- Keep skills and abilities in mind
- Focus on enjoyment, not achievement
- Be mindful of exposure to upsetting content – news, TV shows, movies, etc.

SAMPLE DAILY PLAN

Morning
- Wash, brush teeth, get dressed.
- Prepare and eat breakfast.
- Have a conversation over coffee.
- Discuss the newspaper, try a craft project, reminisce over old photos.
- Take a break, have some quiet time.
- Do some chores.
- Take a walk or play a game.

Afternoon
- Prepare and eat lunch, read mail, wash dishes.
- Listen to music, do crossword puzzles, watch TV.
- Do some gardening, take a walk, visit a friend.
- Take a short break or nap.

Evening
- Prepare and eat dinner, clean the kitchen.
- Talk over coffee and dessert.
- Play cards, watch a movie, give a massage.
- Take a bath, get ready for bed, read a book.
Caregiver Stress

10 Symptoms of Caregiver Stress

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Social withdrawal
4. Anxiety
5. Depression
6. Exhaustion
7. Sleeplessness
8. Irritability
9. Lack of concentration
10. Health problems

Take care of yourself

- Physical activity
- Stay connected
- Ask for help and support
- Relaxation techniques
- Access resources
- Attend support group
24/7 Helpline

- Free Service
- Available around the clock, 365 days a year
- Helpline specialists and master’s level clinicians offer confidential support and information
- Bilingual staff and translation service in over 200 languages
- Live Chat available

24/7 Helpline
800.272.3900
alzheimer’s association®

Live Chat
Virtual Programs

• Free education programs available at [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)
  – 10 Warning Signs
  – Understanding Alzheimer’s and Dementia
  – Dementia Conversations
  – Effective Communication Strategies
  – Legal and Financial Planning
  – Understanding and Responding to Dementia-Related Behaviors
  – And more!

We have transitioned in-person support groups and education programs to virtual platforms during COVID-19 pandemic.
Community Resource Finder

www.communityresourcefinder.org

Get easy access to resources, community programs and services.

Based on guidance from local governments and health departments during the COVID-19 crisis, many programs will be offered virtually rather than in-person.

- Alzheimer's Association
  Programs and Events

- AARP Family Caregiving
  Programs and Events

- Care at Home

- Community Services

- Housing Options

- Medical Services
ALZConnected® is a free online community for everyone affected by Alzheimer’s or another dementia, including:

- People living with the disease
- Caregivers
- Family members
- Friends
- Individuals who have lost someone to Alzheimer’s or another dementia
Alzheimer’s Navigator®
www.alzheimersnavigator.org

Alzheimer’s Navigator is a free online tool that helps guide caregivers to answers by creating a personalized action plan and linking you to information, support and local resources.
Questions?

24/7 Helpline
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