

Dementia Care

Dementia Care Quick Reference Guide





Quick Reference Overview & Checklist

What You Need to Know About Dementia

Knowing the difference between age-related changes and dementia can help families feel more prepared. While aging can bring small shifts in memory, dementia involves more profound changes in thinking and daily functioning. These changes happen in the brain and deserve understanding and care. This guide provides essential advice and practical strategies for families of those living with dementia.

Common Types of Dementia:

- ✦ **Alzheimer's disease** – The most common form of dementia
- ✦ **Vascular dementia** – Often follows strokes or other events that affect blood flow to the brain
- ✦ **Lewy body dementia** – Can cause visual hallucinations and movement issues and cognitive alertness can be unpredictable
- ✦ **Parkinson's disease dementia** – May develop in people living with Parkinson's disease and shares common underlying pathology as Lewy body dementia the difference is the onset of symptoms

Early Dementia Signs to Watch For

Memory & Thinking Changes:

- ✦ Memory loss that disrupts daily life
- ✦ Challenges in planning or solving problems
- ✦ Confusion about time, place, or familiar people
- ✦ Difficulty completing familiar tasks

Behavioral Expressions & Mood Changes:

- ✦ Increased anxiety or agitation
- ✦ Personality shifts from the usual demeanor
- ✦ Evening restlessness ("sundowner's syndrome")
- ✦ Wandering or getting lost

Communication Changes:

- ✦ Difficulty finding the right words
- ✦ Trouble following conversations
- ✦ Repeating questions or stories
- ✦ Withdrawing from social activities

Daily Care Action Checklist

Home Safety Modifications

Bathroom:

- Install grab bars in shower/tub
- Place non-slip mats on the floor
- Ensure adequate lighting
- Remove locks from bathroom doors
- Secure medications
- Add contrasting colors if bathroom is all white

Throughout Home:

- Remove or secure throw rugs – especially those with busy designs
- Clear walkways of clutter
- Install motion-sensor lighting
- Mark glass doors with decals
- Secure potentially dangerous items (knives, chemicals)
- Be aware of lighting throughout that cause shadows that could be distressing

Wandering: Seek to Understand Why

- Incorporate technology that has motion sensing capabilities
- Ensure ID bracelet/necklace is always worn
- Remove car keys
- Create safe walking areas indoors and outdoors
- Notify neighbors about wandering risk

Wayfinding:

Houses don't usually have a lot of signage, like assisted living and nursing homes. However, the use of some signs (large lettering and/or picture) might help people who have trouble finding a particular space, like the bathroom.

Look at the possibility of adding colored borders or mild contrast to hallways or rooms to help certain areas stand out and be more easily seen.





How to Communicate with Someone Living with Dementia

DO:

- Speak slowly and make eye contact
- Use familiar words
- Be patient with responses
- Listen without rushing
- Use gentle touch when appropriate
- Focus on feelings rather than facts
- Use the 5 R's when they appear distressed (Remain calm, Respond to feelings, Reassure, Remove briefly if needed, Return when calm)
- Use SEE — Slow down, Engage, and Empower

DON'T:

- Argue with their reality
- Correct or contradict
- Ask "Do you remember?"
- Rush through conversations
- Talk about them as if they're not there
- Nothing about them, without them

Daily Routine Planning

- Establish consistent meal times
- Plan meaningful activities that are familiar for late afternoon
- Maintain regular bedtime routine
- Include meaningful activities they enjoy and modify as needed for maximum participation

- Build in rest periods
- Keep the environment calm and familiar
- Ensure adequate lighting, especially in bathrooms
- Include memory activities like photo sharing or light journaling

Support Resources & Planning

Emergency Contacts Template

Primary Care Doctor:

Phone:

Neurologist/Specialist:

Phone:

Local Emergency Services: 911

Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222

Trusted Neighbor/Friend:

Phone:

Professional Caregiver Service:

Phone:

When to Seek Professional Help

Immediate Help Needed:

- ✦ Safety concerns (wandering, falls, driving)
- ✦ Behaviors/Expressions of indicating increased distress
- ✦ Concerns of risk or danger that could be harmful to them or others
- ✦ Caregiver exhaustion or burnout
- ✦ Significant changes in eating/drinking
- ✦ Recurring infections or health issues

Planning Help Needed:

- ✦ Legal documents (Power of Attorney, advance directives)
- ✦ Financial planning for care costs
- ✦ Long-term care decisions
- ✦ Family caregiver support with organizations such as Dementia Action Alliance and your local Alzheimer's Association.

Caregiver Self-Care Checklist

Daily/Weekly Self-Care:

- Take at least 2-3 hours for yourself
- Maintain one personal hobby or interest
- Connect with friends or family
- Get adequate sleep (7-8 hours) every night
- Eat regular, healthy meals
- Complete a quick burnout self-check (am I tired, isolated, or constantly worrying?)

Monthly Self-Care:

- Attend support group meeting — Suggested with organizations such as the Dementia Action Alliance and your local Alzheimer's Association
- Schedule personal healthcare appointments
- Evaluate care plan effectiveness
- Ask for help when needed
- Review and update emergency plans

Important Conversations to Have

With Your Loved One (early stages):

- Care preferences and values
- Financial and legal planning wishes
- End-of-life care preferences
- Important life stories and memories

With Family Members:

- Care responsibilities and roles
- Financial planning and resources
- Emergency plans and backup care
- When to consider bringing in a professional caregiver

With Healthcare Providers:

- Disease progression expectations
- Medication management
- Safety concerns
- Available dementia support services



Next Steps

1. **Complete the home safety checklist** - Start with bathroom and bedroom modifications
2. **Establish daily routines** - Create consistency in meals, activities, and bedtime
3. **Build your support network** - Connect with local support groups and professional services, like the Dementia Action Alliance and your local Alzheimer's Association
4. **Plan for the future** - Complete legal documents while your loved one can participate

REMEMBER: You don't have to do this alone. Professional care partners can provide essential dementia support at home while helping your loved one maintain dignity and quality of life.

For comprehensive dementia care support, visit [HomewatchCareGivers.com](https://www.homewatchcaregivers.com) or call (toll-free) 1-(888) 404-5191 to connect with your local office. Learn how our trained care partners can help your family navigate the dementia journey with compassion and expertise.

**Homewatch
CareGivers™**
Caring experts. Expert care.

Find your local office:

<https://www.homewatchcaregivers.com/locations/>



Call our national line:

1 (888) 404-5191



Schedule online:

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