

Brain

HEALTH PROGRAM



Tip Guide



Brain Boost



Brain Health 101

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HEALTHY BRAIN AGING AND CLINICAL TRIAL RESEARCH CALL:

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MEDICINE.UKY.EDU/CENTERS/SBCOA



Program Description:

Brain Boost

Activities When Living with Early to Moderate Dementia

Brain Health 101

Activities When Living with Early to Moderate Dementia

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Alexa

You've heard of Amazon, but have you heard of Alexa? Alexa is an incredible cloud-based in-home technology. You can install an Alexa in your home and it will allow you to do multiple things. You can program it to remind you to take your medicine. You can program it to remind you to take out the trash. You can put a grocery shopping list on it and when you get ready to go to the grocery store, Alexa will tell you everything you've added to your list. Alexa can also have a to do list. You can also program Alexa to call a certain phone number. When you say, "Alexa, call my buddy." It will call the number you've pre-programmed in it. This doesn't qualify for 911, but if you've fallen and want to let a loved one know, you can use this to call them. Alexa can also access the internet. So, if you wanted to know about Paris, you could say, "Alexa, tell me about Paris" and you would be given information about that, or if you wanted to know what the weather forecast was for the day you would say, "Alexa, tell me the weather for today." Alexa can save a lot of time while helping you stay organized. You can get the technology for Alexa at Amazon or your home improvement stores.

(Make sure to hold up your hand at some point to show what Alexa will look like)—add in during editing

Calming Techniques

Did you know that anxiety stems from the amygdala in our brains? It's part of the human fight/flight/freeze mechanism, part of the limbic system, and it is a defense mechanism for stress. This defense mechanism triggers a response to a perceived threat. Sometimes that response causes our blood pressure to rise. Sometimes it causes an upset stomach. Sometimes it causes us to worry and lose sleep. It may cause you to want to flee the situation, or fight back. If you find yourself upset, panicked, or anxious, you can try some healthy calming techniques. These may include listening to music, watching funny videos or a sitcom, going for a walk, or finding a pillow and screaming into it for a moment. You could try meditating or deep breathing. You may want to relax your body and drop your shoulders, then take your tongue to the roof of your mouth and take a deep breath in and out. If you find that your anxiety is affecting your daily life, it's important to talk to your primary care provider. Know that you are not alone in your stress and anxiety. We all experience it, and sometimes we need some calming strategies to cope.

Diet and Exercise

Science is showing how diet and exercise are contributing factors to brain health!

Exercising three times a week for a minimum of thirty minutes can improve memory and thinking abilities! This helps release chemicals in the brain that help protect it and combat depression! So for just 90 minutes each week, you could help protect your brain!

In regards to diet, studies show that the Mediterranean diet can help keep your brain healthy. A Mediterranean diet was studied because people living in the Mediterranean area were living longer healthier lives with less cardiovascular disease, and staying cognitively healthy for a longer period. The Mediterranean diet is an eating pattern, a style that allows you to enjoy many types of foods. The diet incorporates whole foods, rather than processed foods. Foods such as fruits, vegetables, fish, and nuts are allowed, while reducing the amount of red meats.

In addition, more scientific studies are showing that luteolin (pronounced Loo tuh luhn) can protect against brain inflammation, thus helping with memory and thinking abilities. Luteolin is a flavonoid found naturally in carrots, chamomile tea, parsley, celery, broccoli and many other vegetables.

So, what we put into our bodies has the ability to alter how our brains work. Foods can protect our brains and improve our overall brain health.

Exercise Safety

Our chance for falls increase for a number of different reasons as we age. We want to make sure we stay safe and active in our homes. That is why it is important to take special precautions to help prevent falls in all the activities that we participate in.

Everything from our normal day to day tasks but also when we add in additional physical activities like stretching, or some other type of exercise.

There are many reasons our balance can be off. Taking multiple medications (more than five preparations) may have side effects or may adversely impact underlying medical conditions. Other factors that could lead to trouble with balance include visual loss, hearing impairment and difficulty with depth perception. Health conditions such as arthritis, dizziness, numb feet and legs, deconditioning due to heart or lung problems and weakened muscles also increase fall risk.

It is important to pay special attention to balance when doing physical activities. Remember that you can always make modifications (sit instead of stand) or stop an activity if you start to feel unstable.

Here are some tips for fall prevention:

Remove potential hazards around the home, like clutter in walkways, on stairs and other areas in the house. Remove loose rugs and other trip hazards, including coffee tables if they are in the line of traffic. This is especially important do check before trying any exercise or physical activity. Also don't forget to check the bathrooms by making sure there are nonslip mats in the bathtub and on the floors.

Be mindful of pets and feeding bowls and make sure they are not posing a fall risk. Place feeding bowls out of the traffic areas.

Make sure walkways are adequately lit, even at night in any area the person may move through after dark. Place night lights in hallways and remind them to turn on lights when they enter dark areas and rooms and when they get up at night to use the bathroom.

Your healthcare provider may prescribe an assist device, such as a walker or rollator to reduce fall risk. That doesn't mean you can't remain active. Many activities can be adapted with the use of such devices. Other places you might need equipment include the bathroom. Equipment such as raised toilet seat, pull bars in the bathroom, bathing seats in the tub and showers reduce fall risk. Non-slip treads on bare steps and safety ramps over stairs may be recommended. Referral to occupational and/or physical therapy may also be recommended to improve strength, balance and mobility as well as daily functions. Ask your medical provider for advice and referrals. Remember the goal is to be active and safe in your home.

Fall and Winter Health

Fall vaccination recommendations continue to evolve post-pandemic. In addition to influenza and COVID-19 vaccines, respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, has been identified as a significant cause of illness in adults over age 60 as well as children. RSV infections result in over 6000 deaths in people over the age of 60 and a new vaccine is available to reduce that risk.

All 3 vaccines are available in most physician offices and pharmacies, but the COVID vaccine is only available in pharmacies. They can be administered one at a time, all 3 at the same time or any combination. They are protective throughout the peak viral infection season so it's recommended to get them in the fall to cover though late fall, winter and early spring. Insurance should cover the cost of all three, but you should check with your insurer's summary of benefits or pharmacist to see if there is a copay requirement.

As always, infection prevention measures are recommended in addition to vaccinating. Good hand washing avoiding people who have symptoms of viral illness will help reduce your risk of getting infected.

Healthcare Directive

It is always a good idea to be prepared, especially preparing for the time when you may be unable to make healthcare decisions for yourself. While no one really enjoys thinking about this, it is one of the kindest things you can do for yourself and your loved ones. It gives you control by documenting your wishes for your care for the future. Preparing for this time includes having a healthcare directive or a living will. A healthcare directive allows you to name someone to act on your behalf to make healthcare decisions if you cannot make them for yourself. This may also be called a durable power of attorney in some states. A living will is a legal document that tells the healthcare community what medical treatments you would or would not want to be used to keep you alive, as well as your preferences for other medical decisions, such as pain management or organ donation.

When making these decisions, it's important to consider your values and quality of life. Would you want treatment to extend your life in any situation? If it meant you would be bed-bound or tube fed, or on a ventilator for the rest of your life? These are decisions that should be given much thought.

You may also want to have a DNR (a Do Not Resuscitate order) or a DNI (Do Not Intubate order), if you were to decide that you would not want cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or to have mechanical ventilation.

Some states have a Physician Order for Life Sustaining Treatment, or POLST and in some states it may be called the Medial Orders for Life Sustaining Treatments, or MOLST. This document is intended for individuals who have already been diagnosed with a serious illness. This form does not replace other directives, but serves as doctor-ordered instructions to insure that you receive the care you prefer. This document stays with the person and may include use of antibiotics, pain management,

requests to be admitted to the hospital, resuscitation, and feeding tubes. This form can be revoked or updated at any time.

When deciding on a person to act as your healthcare agent and make healthcare decisions for you, it is important to thoughtfully select someone who meets your state's requirements for a health care agent, is not your doctor or part of your healthcare team, is willing and able to discuss end of life issues with you, and is trustworthy and make decisions that go along with your wishes.

If you already have these documents in place, it is a good idea to look over them and make sure they are up-to-date with who you would choose today. It is possible they were drafted long ago and due to dementia or another issue, you may need to make another choice. Perhaps the person you chose to make your healthcare decisions is incapacitated, or long deceased. Maybe you have changed your mind about whether to receive CPR or not. You can always change your mind and update healthcare directives, but you should check with your state to see what the guidelines are. You may need to destroy your old document and replace it with a new one.

It is also important to draft these documents as early as possible while your loved one with dementia is competent and able to make these decisions on his/her own. At a certain point, the person with dementia may lack capacity, a legal term meaning the person lacks the ability to enter into valid agreements. The sooner a person can make these decisions and get a healthcare directive, the better.

These are all very personal decisions. Consulting with your doctor about his or her medical recommendations can be helpful. Consulting with an attorney and having him or her draft these documents allows you to feel more confident as he or she provides their expertise in legal matters.

If you need legal assistance, you may qualify for assistance from the Legal Services Corporation. They are a non-profit established by Congress in 1974 to provide financial support for low-income Americans. They Corporation currently provides funding to 132 independent nonprofit legal aid organizations in every state and US Territories. They can be reached at 202-295-1500.

(To add to last screens of video-)

Additional Resources

Legal Services Corporation- 1-202-295-1500

www.FiveWishes.org

<https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/financial-legal/free-printable-advance-directives/>

Medication Dispensers

Technology has come a long way. Did you know you can use technology to remind you when it is time to take your medicine? It's not just on our phones. There are actual medication dispensers that can help you manage your medication.

Your medications are inserted into the dispenser in advance, and programmed to dispense at scheduled times. The machine will beep to alert you that your pills are ready and continue beeping until you get your pills out of the machine. These dispensers are made to help YOU stay independent!

Additional Resources

Medication Safety- [https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/medication-safety_\(1\)](https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/medication-safety_(1))

Online Bill Paying

Is the mail getting to be too overwhelming for you? Is it too hard to remember to order new checks? Are you forgetting to pay your bills on time? Automatic online bill pay may be a good solution for you! Automatic bill pay allows you to set up an account that automatically deducts the payment from your checking account, or another account you deem to use. It alleviates the stress of having to remember if you've paid a bill or not. You can pay for your water, electric, gas, mortgage...just about any type of bill electronically over the internet with automatic online bill pay.

Power of Attorney

A Power of Attorney is a legal document that gives someone of your choosing the authority to make decisions on your behalf while you are still living. The person you give authority to is then called the agent, or attorney-in-fact.

A healthcare power of attorney allows someone to make medical decisions for you.

A financial or business power of attorney allows someone the authority to conduct business or make financial decisions on your behalf.

You can have separate healthcare power of attorney and financial or business power of attorney documents. You can name separate individuals to act in those roles. For instance, your daughter may be really good with medical decisions, so you choose her to be your healthcare agent, while your son may be very good with managing money and select him to be your financial agent. The agent can also be the same person.

A durable power of attorney has wording so that if you lose capacity to make decisions for yourself, the person you have chosen will act on your behalf for you.

Specific powers are written into the power of attorney, and depending on those specifications, the power of the agent may be limited. It is a good idea to have an attorney draft this document with you to make sure you have everything covered.

When appointing someone to carry out your decisions, it's important to have a conversation with that person and make sure they want to serve in this role and that they know your wishes and can carry them out. You will want to make sure this person is trustworthy and can act in your best interest.

An agent cannot change a person's legal will or shift the agent role to someone else.

If at any time you change your mind, you can revoke the power of attorney and choose someone else to act as your agent.

If you already have a power of attorney document, you may want to review it from time to time and make sure the agent you have selected is still the best person to carry out your decisions as health needs and life circumstances may have changed since the power of attorney was written.

Additional Resources

Legal Services Corporation- 1-202-295-1500

Social Engagement

It's been clinically proven that socialization helps us retain our brain power! Even if you have memory concerns, being with others can be helpful for your brain and general well-being. If you are looking for ways to be more socially engaged, we have a few ideas.

You might want to reach out to your local library. Libraries do more than just provide books! They are now offering classes, and those classes encourage meeting people. Classes may be offered around topics such as genealogy, birding, or even photography.

Another idea is to try out your local senior center. Senior Centers throughout the country are providing space for seniors to get to know one another. Not only do they provide lunch, they also have programs that bring people together. Classes like tai chi, knitting, pottery, Bingo, music, and some even take trips. This is an excellent way to meet other people!

Don't put off connecting with family and friends. Pick up the phone and call or use your phone or computer to make a video call. Spending time talking and sharing with friends and family is another important part of social engagement.

Whatever you do, don't do it alone! Find a friend, find a group. Get social!

Silver Sneakers

Silver Sneakers is a great way to ensure you are getting your daily physical activity. Silver Sneakers is a national program that works with Medicare to provide in-person classes, Live on demand video workouts you can do from home, and a fitness app. For persons 65 and over, Medicare may cover the cost of the Silver Sneakers program. To find out if you are eligible, visit <https://tools.silversneakers.com/> or call 866-584-7389.

There may be other programs in your community that are free of charge or covered by your insurance. To find these, contact your local senior center, Area Agency on Aging, or your insurance company.

Additional Resources

Silver Sneakers Information- <https://tools.silversneakers.com/> or call 866-584-7389

Area Agency on Aging- 1-800-677-1116

Area Agency on Aging & Community Resources

Pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. We've all heard that before and know that there is pride in taking care of ourselves, but sometimes trying to do it all ourselves causes more hardship. We get burnt out, have added stress, and that can snowball into our own health issues on top of caring for our loved one. Fortunately, caring for a person with dementia does not have to be such an independent experience. There may be some resources in your community to help. Established by the 1973 amendment to the 1965 Older Americans Act, Area Agencies on Aging were created to service each county in the United States. Area Agencies on Aging have resource centers and offer many services ranging from caregiver care transitions, elder justice, health insurance assistance programs, and healthy aging home and community-based services. One program that the AAA provides is the National Family Caregiver Program. It is a non-asset based program, which means you do not have to qualify based on income. Caregivers are provided monetary funds for respite care services and medical devices. You can visit www.usaging.org to get started on finding resources in your area. If you don't have access to a computer, you can call 1-800-677-1116 to find the Area Agency on Aging serving your county.

There are also community services such as occupational home safety evaluations. Your doctor can refer you to an occupational therapist who will come to your home to ensure it is a safe place for you and your loved one. They examine the entire home to make sure entries and exits are safe, bathrooms, kitchens, living areas. Every part of the home can be evaluated and recommendations are then made to eliminate possible safety hazards.

The Medicare Part D drug plan offers a Medication Therapy Management program. (MTM)

- The MTM program gives you a comprehensive review of your medications and the reasons why you take them. It provides a written summary of your medication review with your doctor or pharmacist, and an action plan to help you make the best use of your medications

There is also a commodity supplemental food program. The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) works to improve the health of low-income persons at least 60 years of age by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA Foods. USDA distributes both food and administrative funds to participating states and Indian Tribal Organizations to operate CSFP. You may contact your local God's Pantry or the Area Agency on Aging to find the CSFP in your area.

Additional Resources

Area Agency on Aging- 1-800-677-1116

Medicare Part A- <https://www.medicare.gov/what-medicare-covers/what-part-a-covers>

Medicare Part D- <https://www.medicare.gov/drug-coverage-part-d>

Bathing

Bathing can be a task that becomes harder as dementia progresses for many reasons. Here are some reasons and possible suggestions of how you can help with bathing.

A person may be very private. They may not want to be seen undressed. If this is the issue, you may want to look away as much as possible. You could have them wear a robe and undress once they get into the shower and close the curtain so you don't see the person. Once the shower is finished, you can hand them the towel and then the robe without looking at the person. Assure them you are not looking. You could also distract them by singing an old favorite song or talking about something they enjoy.

The person may have difficulty sequencing and knowing what to do in the bath or shower. They may not understand what to do with the soap or shampoo or how to do it. You may need to provide stand by assistance, reminding them of what to do each step of the way. Verbal reminders may suffice, but they may need visual cueing too. If they need physical assistance, help them by putting your hand with theirs to do the particular task, so they are still in control of each movement.

The person may be afraid of a slick tub or shower. Do you have grab bars or a shower seat installed? Do you have non-skid treads on the tub floor? These can help a person feel more secure and prevent falls.

The person may not like the water touching their head or other body parts. Installing a hand held shower device will allow them to be in control of where the water goes. Also getting the person's head wet last can be helpful.

The person may feel cold in the bathroom. Warm towels right out of the dryer can help. Using a space heater or turning up the heat

in the home for a bit while the person showers can help warm up the bathroom. Remember to turn the heater off or the heat down after!

The person may be afraid of getting burned. To prevent burns, turn the water heater down to 120 degrees.

The person may not understand they haven't had a shower in several days and need one to get clean. Rather than argue with them, perhaps you can add bathing to the calendar. By showing it to them, they may be convinced that today is a shower day!

The person may also be afraid of their reflection in the mirror in the bathroom, and that may prevent the person from going into the bathroom. You can remove the mirror, or cover it up with a poster or piece of fabric.

Maybe our own expectations of how often a person needs a shower or bath are too much and we need to minimize the number of times we are trying to get them to bathe each week. A few times each week may be enough if they are not very dirty. Sponge baths may be an easier solution.

We hope these tips will help as you keep your loved one clean!

Extra Tip for End of Episode-

Alzheimer's Association- Bathing <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/bathing>

Care Plans

Creating a care plan is a vital part of ensuring that you and your loved one are getting the full scope of services that are available to you. Medicare now has a billing code, CPT 99483 that allows you to receive care planning services. When meeting with your doctor's office, time should be given to prepare this care plan. The plan should reflect an assessment of the medical condition, management of any symptoms, referrals for managing caregiver stress, behavior and safety management, support needs, and referrals to community-based support services, in-home care, and legal and financial assistance. It can also include referrals for things like physical therapy, adult day programs, and driving evaluations. This care plan must be written and discussed with the patient and/or caregiver and can be updated as needed because services needed throughout the course of the disease process will change over time. Documenting and sharing this care plan with a person's medical providers simplifies communication. A care plan is a good tool to ensure you and your providers are on the same page for your medical journey.

Additional Resources

Alzheimer's Association Care Planning Toolkit for Medical Providers- <https://www.alz.org/careplanning/downloads/care-planning-toolkit.pdf>

Alzheimer's Association Care Planning- <https://www.alz.org/professionals/health-systems-medical-professionals/care-planning>

Connecting with a Person with Dementia

Game nights, and games, in general, are all about connecting. There are so many ways to connect with a person with dementia and create meaningful moments. We are not limited to games in that respect. Sometimes it is a look, a smile, a compliment. And many times those are spontaneous gestures.

Other times we may plan an activity as a way to connect with our loved one. Your loved one may not be able to do an activity from start to finish, but they may be able to watch, give advice, or do some pieces of an activity. It is helpful to join their reality. What can they still do? Even with a little help, they can be successful, and you can create a moment of joy and connection!

Perhaps they love flowers. Maybe they cannot go pick flowers, but they may be able to arrange the flowers in a vase.

Or maybe they do not remember the rules to a favorite game, but still enjoy playing the game with their own made-up rules. Join them. Play along their way!

How about humor? Do they like to laugh? Tell a funny story or a joke. Laugh at THEIR funny stories and jokes!

Connecting through song is a wonderful way to bring joy to the day. Singing an old song, clapping hands, tapping toes, even dancing together can spark a good moment.

Touch can be another way to reassure a person or let them know they are loved. Holding hands, giving a hug or a kiss, or putting your arm around that person can be a good way to connect. Just slowing down and being together are ways to connect.

So, slow down, join their reality. Look for the things they can still do. You'll be surprised at all the ways you can connect!

To put at the end of the episode-

For more ways to connect with your loved one:

Alzheimer's Association- Activities- <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/activities>

The Best Friends Book of Alzheimer's Activities, Vol. 1 by Virginia Bell, David Troxel, Tonya M. Cox, and Robin Hamon.

The Best Friends Book of Alzheimer's Activities, Vol. 2 by Virginia Bell, David Troxel, Tonya M. Cox, and Robin Hamon.

Dealing with Stress and Anxiety

There are lots of triggers in our day to day life for stress and anxiety. Luckily, there are also things that can help. Here are just a few:

Carve out some time each day for yourself. That can be as little as five minutes every day to recharge. There are many ways to do this. Finding something you enjoy that allows your mind to focus on something other than caring for your loved one can reduce your anxiety. Things such as going for a walk, yoga, meditation, prayer, talking with a friend, laughter, listening to music, journaling, and deep breathing may be helpful.

Eating a healthy diet that limits sweets and salty foods can help to alleviate anxiety.

Limit caffeine consumption for you and your loved one with dementia.

Limit the amount of time you watch the news. This can cause added anxiety.

Pick your battles. Learn what you can control and what you can't. Sometimes a change in perspective can help.

Getting a break from your loved one can help. Have a friend or family member spend time with your loved one so you can get a break. Enroll your loved one in an adult day program.

Take one day at a time, one moment at a time. Thinking about all the things that could go wrong or imagining the worst are never good for anyone. Focus on the moment and find something to appreciate. If you are planning for future care needs, allow yourself to spend a limited time focusing on that.

Sometimes care partners may find that they need medications to help ease their anxiety and that is okay. Please talk with your doctor to find something that works for you in your situation.

Additional Resources

Caregiver Stress- <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/caregiver-health/caregiver-stress>

Eating

Sometimes eating and getting proper nutrition during dementia can be difficult. Here are some tips for getting your loved one to eat.

Create an environment that is free from distractions. Limit what is on the table and the noise in the room so that your loved one can focus on eating.

Smaller meals several times a day may be better for your loved one. They may be overwhelmed by a large amount of food on the plate.

Finger foods may be preferred as using utensils may be difficult. Working with an occupational therapist to alter eating utensils may help.

Distinguish food on the plate. White potatoes on a white plate may be hard to differentiate. If serving white foods, put them on a contrasting colored plate, such as red.

Taste buds change and things that are sweet and spicy may be more flavorful for your loved one. You can add sweetener or spices to help ignite flavor.

Who wants to dine alone? Sit down with your loved one and eat together. Sometimes the visual cuing of watching you eat can remind the person of what they are supposed to do with the food on their plate.

For more tips, visit the Alzheimer's Association's website at:

<https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/food-eating>

Additional Resources

Alzheimer's Association- Food & Eating-

<https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/food-eating>

Energy Conservation Tip

Are you worn out? Caregiving demands can be exhausting. It can be a 24 hour a day and night job. To help you, it may be worthwhile to take a look at your day or week and see exactly what is using your energy. Can you prioritize the things that are most important for you to do each day?

Sometimes when we provide care for our loved ones, we can get overwhelmed with perfection and fixing things. Pick your battles. Readjust your expectations. Sometimes it's okay to let some things go.

This will look different for every caregiver. For example, is it important to make your bed each day? Does that take your time and energy away from something more important on your priority list?

Are you using your energy to get upset with your loved one with dementia because they are pacing the hallway again? Rather than getting upset, channel your energy into something else, like redirecting your loved one to another activity, such as folding towels or sorting silverware. Or perhaps if you know your loved one is safe, what is the problem with them pacing again?

Evaluate how you are using your energy and conserve it where you can. You'll be a more energetic caregiver!

For more information about caregiver health:

Alzheimer's Association- Caregiver Health

<https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/caregiver-health>

National Institute on Aging- Taking Care of Yourself

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/taking-care-yourself-tips-caregivers>

Fall Prevention

Falls are a leading cause of injury among older adults for many reasons. If caring for a person with dementia, we need to take special precautions to prevent falls.

Those with dementia may have difficulty with balance. They may experience changes in vision, hearing, be more sensitive to temperatures, and have difficulty with depth perception. They may also have other health conditions or be on medications that cause dizziness, joint pain, shortness of breath, or numbness in feet and legs. Being aware of these things can help us be proactive. Here are some tips to prevent falls.

Consider wearing comfortable footwear that fits properly with nonskid soles.

Remove home hazards like clutter in walkways or high trafficked areas, remove coffee tables and loose rugs. Immediately clean up spills and use nonslip mats in the bathtub or shower.

Be mindful of any pets and feeding bowls that could be trip hazards in the home. Ensure that bowls are out of walkways.

Light up your home. People with dementia need brightly lit spaces to be able to see. At night, use night lights to create a path to the bathroom so the person will not have to find their way in the dark.

Your healthcare provider may recommend a cane or walker. Other assistive devices may include a raised toilet seat, grab bars and a seat for the shower or tub, and nonslip treads for bare steps. Ramps may also be suggested. A medical referral to an occupational therapist may be needed to do a home safety assessment. Ask your doctor if he or she would be willing to refer you.

Additional Resources

National Institute on Aging- Falls & Fall Prevention-

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/topics/falls-and-falls-prevention>

Garden Safety

Gardening is a wonderful activity for anyone! Young, old, and in-between, gardening can be a great activity that provides purpose. When gardening with a person with moderate stage dementia, there are some safety tips to be mindful of.

A person's balance can be affected, so you will want to be cautious about uneven gardens, and bending down and getting back up again. Raised garden beds or pots may be a better alternative. Stools and benches can be useful.

Supervision may be required when your loved one is using tools such as hoes or spades, which can be sharp. You may want to switch to smaller hand held tools. (Raise up smaller tools)

Many summer plants require a lot of sun to grow. However, too much sun is not so good for us. Make sure to wear sunscreen and a wide brimmed hat when gardening to protect yourself. You may find it better to garden early in the morning or late in the day to avoid too much sun exposure.

If you keep safety in mind, your gardening efforts can be a rewarding experience for you and your loved one!

Grief/Recasting

Sometimes when we are caring for a loved one with dementia, we long for the normalcy of the past. We long for them to be able to do the things they did before. Sometimes we get stuck in these feelings. Jane Glidewell said it best, “You can clutch the past so tightly to your chest that it leaves your arms too full to embrace the present.” While wishing for and holding onto the past are normal grief responses, we may miss out on the joy of today. We need to be able to understand that our loved one needs us to move along with them as they journey through dementia. When we can recast our relationship with that person, we change our perception of the relationship and our expectations. We realize that we have a role to play that requires us to stop focusing on what used to be and focus on what is needed now. Open your arms and embrace the little moments of joy that may come.

If you are struggling with grief, talk with someone in your faith community, a counselor, doctor, or contact the Alzheimer’s Association’s 24-hour Helpline at 1-800-272-3900.

Additional Resources

Alzheimer’s Association 24-Hour Helpline- 1-800-272-3900

Alzheimer’s Association- Grief & Loss- <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/caregiver-health/grief-loss-as-alzheimers-progresses>

Kitchen Safety

Paying close attention to safety is of major importance in the kitchen. A kitchen is full of possible dangers including being burned or cut. When working in the kitchen with a person with dementia, it is very important to be proactive. You know the old saying, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” This could not be truer than now. Vision and lack of understanding and judgment may diminish abilities in the kitchen. To help with this, knives may need to be locked in a drawer. Out of sight, out of mind.

Handles of pots and pans will need to be placed away from the front of the stove. A stove may need to be unplugged if the person is becoming dangerous in their cooking abilities. Even microwave usage may need to be monitored. There are many extra tools including food processors, slicers, blenders, and many more that may need to be put out of your loved one’s sight to prevent injury.

Supervision in the kitchen is required by the middle stages of dementia. A person with dementia may want to assist a care partner in preparing meals and snacks but should not take on the full responsibility of doing so. Pay attention to what your loved one is doing. Give one-step instructions at a time. Demonstrate so your loved one knows what to do. Labeling cabinets and drawers with pictures and words may also be helpful during the middle stages.

Additional Resources

Alzheimer’s Association Home Safety- <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/safety/home-safety>

Kitchen Activities

When making things with your loved one with dementia, especially in the kitchen, it's important to realize that your loved one may not be able to do an activity from start to finish by themselves. Doing the activity with them is beneficial because it helps to keep them engaged and safe. As a partner, you will need to fill in the gaps where your loved one struggles. For instance, it may be difficult for a person with early to moderate dementia to understand what all of the ingredients are in a recipe. Helping to get the ingredients out of the cabinet and set them in a clutter free workspace will help. Verbally cueing the person for the next ingredient is helpful. They may have difficulty focusing for long periods of time so invite them to participate for shorter specific tasks, such as adding an egg to the recipe, or stirring the cake batter.

It is also important to focus on the process of being in the kitchen together cooking or baking rather than the end product. We've all had things come out of the oven that didn't quite taste right, haven't we? If your loved one is insistent on adding an ingredient that does not mix well with what you are making, take it in stride. Try your best not to argue, but try to direct them to something that would work better. If this doesn't work, you may just have to go with what they want and smile. Patience is key!

While creating something in the kitchen, offer genuine praise, and when finished, you might say something such as "Look what we did!" or "Look what we made! Isn't this delicious?"

Medicare & Medicaid

Definition

The terms Medicare and Medicaid can be quite confusing, so we hope to shed some light on these terms.

Medicare is a federally funded program that provides healthcare for older adults, or those under 65 with a disability. Medicare is a healthcare system you pay into over time as you are working, and reap the benefits when you are 65 or older.

Medicare Part A is hospital insurance. There may be a slight copay attached to it. Part A can cover things like inpatient care in the hospital, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech language pathology services, short-term skilled nursing facility stays, Hospice care, and home health care. Home health care is ordered by a doctor. The home health agency caring for you must be Medicare-certified. Home health does not cover 24-hour a day care at your home, meals delivered to your home, or homemaker services like shopping, cleaning or laundry that are not related to your care plan. You would need to contact an in-home care agency and most of those accept private pay or long-term care insurance.

With **Medicare Part B**, a person will pay a monthly premium and it will pay for things like doctor visits, durable medical equipment, and ambulance services.

Medicare Part C, or Medicare Advantage plans are offered by Medicare-approved private companies that must follow rules set by Medicare. If you join a Medicare Advantage Plan, you'll still have Medicare but you'll get most of your Part A and Part B

coverage from your Medicare Advantage Plan, not Original Medicare.

Since January 1, 2006, everyone with Medicare, regardless of income, health status, or prescription drug usage has had access to prescription drug coverage through **Medicare Part D**. The Medicare Part D drug plan also offers a Medication Therapy Management program. (MTM)

The MTM program gives you a comprehensive review of your medications and the reasons why you take them. It provides a written summary of your medication review with your doctor or pharmacist, and an action plan to help you make the best use of your medications

Now let's talk about Medicaid.

If you are looking into long-term nursing home care, Medicare does not cover the cost of this. **Medicaid** is a state funded program that is asset based. This program does receive some federal funds, too. Each state has different eligibility requirements. The Medicaid office will look at your assets to see if you qualify.

For assistance with understanding more, contact your local Area Agency on Aging State Health Insurance Program coordinator. These coordinators are authorized to provide support information, counseling, and assistance activities related to Medicare, Medicaid, and other health insurance options such as: Medicare Supplement insurance, long-term care insurance, and managed care options. To find an office near you, call 1-800-677-1116.

Additional Resources

<https://www.hhs.gov/answers/medicare-and-medicaid/who-is-eligible-for-medicare/index.html>

Medicare Part A- <https://www.medicare.gov/what-medicare-covers/what-part-a-covers>

Medicare Part B- <https://www.medicare.gov/what-medicare-covers/what-part-b-covers>

Medicare Advantage (Part C)- <https://www.medicare.gov/sign-upchange-plans/types-of-medicare-health-plans/medicare-advantage-plans/how-do-medicare-advantage-plans-work>

Medicare Part D- <https://www.medicare.gov/drug-coverage-part-d>

Medicaid- <https://www.medicaid.gov/>

To find a State Health Insurance Program coordinator in your area, contact 1-800-677-1116.

Scams

The rate of scams targeting seniors is increasing. Having dementia increases a person's vulnerability and risk of being a victim of a scam due to a person's possible impulsivity, lack of good judgment and executive functioning. Scammers try to take advantage of this by gaining a person's trust and confidence, getting an emotional and quick response, and trying to keep the scam a secret. They also try to get money in untraceable ways. While you may not be able to protect yourself or your loved one completely, there are some things you can do to reduce your risk and your loved one's risk.

- Know who you are dealing with
- Be cautious of wiring money
- Gift cards are for gifts only
- Don't click on links or text messages
- Treat your personal information like cash
- Protect your Social Security number
- Protect Medicaid / Medicare / Insurance information
- Pay by credit card (NOT debit card). There are greater protections! That way you can dispute charges and limit the damage if it turns out you were scammed.

If using social media, limit who can see your posts. You may need to take social media apps off of the person with dementia's phone if you suspect they may be more susceptible.

If using the phone, only answer if you know who the caller is.

Put up a “no solicitation” sign on the outside entrance. · Call the national “Do Not Call” Registry (1.888.382.1222). · Remove a person’s name from the credit bureau’s mailing list. Call the Consumer Credit and Reporting Industry at (1.888.567.8688). · Register with the Direct Marketing Association (DMA), www.dmachoice.org. “...registering won’t eliminate unwanted mail but can reduce it.”

To help with unwanted mail solicitations, have the person with dementia’s mail sent directly to your home or a PO Box. That way you can see what they are receiving and get rid of anything suspicious.

If you suspect you have been a victim of a scam, call the Office of the Attorney General in your state.

With a little added supervision and prevention, you can help to keep your loved one safer.

Additional Resources

Do Not Call Registry- 1-888-382-1222

Consumer Credit & Reporting Industry- 1-888-567-8688

Direct Marketing Association (DMA)- www.dmachoice.org

Staying Hydrated

As dementia progresses, the person may not realize they are thirsty, and can become dehydrated. As you care for your loved one, make it a priority to help them stay hydrated. Offer fluids throughout the day that are not filled with sugar or caffeine. This will help them stay hydrated longer. Flavoring water with a little fruit juice may help if they do not like the taste of water. Sugar-free popsicles and jello-s are also good, especially in summer months. Summer fruits like melons are flavorful and can also help! They are made up of as much as 92% water! Warm caffeine-free teas such as green tea can also help with hydration. Eating and drinking with your loved one rather than singling them out can be helpful, too. Sit down with them on the patio and have refreshing glass of something together.

Traveling with a Person with Dementia

Traveling with a person with dementia is cause for some careful planning and know-how. This could be in-town trips to the grocery store or to doctor's visits, or could be more lengthy drives.

If a person with dementia startles easily, it may be a good idea to have them ride in the backseat so they will not be bothered by other vehicles quickly approaching.

Keep the temperature in the vehicle comfortable, and be aware of verbal and non-verbal signs of discomfort.

If needed, assist with buckling the seatbelt. Ask for permission to do so.

Avoid loud music in the vehicle that may cause agitation.

Driving slower than normal may be better for a person with dementia as rushing and fast movements can be overwhelming.

Travel by plane may involve more planning and notifying the airline of specific needs of your loved one. When flying, try to have direct flights or longer layovers to avoid rushing, as rushing can cause trigger agitation.

Travel takes a person out of their normal routine. Be aware that the person could wander. To help ease your mind when traveling, you may want to consider some form of wearable identification for your loved one. This could include Medic Alert/Safe Return wandering support. These devices help first responders and families reconnect should a person with dementia become lost. For more information about this program, visit <https://www.medicalert.org/> or call 800.ID.ALERT (800.432.5378). (Insert website and phone number on the screen)

Utilizing these tips should help ensure your loved one has better travel experience. For more tips, visit the Alzheimer's Association's webpage about traveling tips found here. (Insert site on the screen). May your travels be safe!

(To add to last screens of video-)

Additional Resources

Alzheimer's Association Traveling- <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/safety/traveling>

Medic Alert Foundation- <https://www.medicalert.org/>

800-432-5378