



**CORONAVIRUS  
(COVID-19)**

# TIPS *for* Caregivers

*of Elders  
with Memory  
Disorders*

**MARCH/APRIL 2020**

When providing daily care to a person with Alzheimer's or dementia, caregivers face special challenges. COVID-19 may present additional concerns because dementia-related behaviors, increased age, and common health conditions may create additional needs.

For example, people with dementia may forget to wash their hands or take other recommended precautions. Conversely, viruses like COVID-19 and the flu may worsen cognitive impairment due to dementia.

In addition to following [guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), caregivers for people living with dementia should consider the following:

## **DEMENTIA SPECIFIC**

- For people living with dementia, increased confusion is often the first symptom of any illness. If a person living with dementia shows rapidly increased confusion, contact your healthcare provider for advice.

- People living with dementia may need extra and/or written reminders and support to remember important hygienic practices from one day to the next.
  - » Consider placing signs in the bathroom and elsewhere to remind people with dementia to wash their hands with soap for 20 seconds.
  - » Demonstrate thorough handwashing.
  - » Alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be a quick alternative to handwashing if the person with dementia cannot get to a sink or wash his/her hands easily.
- Inquire about fulfilling longer prescriptions that require fewer trips to the pharmacy.
- Make plans for the person with dementia should adult day care, respite, etc., be modified or canceled in response to COVID-19.

**CONTINUED**

- Make plans for the person with dementia’s care management should the caregiver become sick themselves.
- Inquire about COVID-19 precautions occurring at long-term care facilities. Ensure they have your emergency contact information as well as a backup.

## IF THE PERSON LIVING WITH DEMENTIA LIVES IN A FACILITY *(assisted living or nursing home)*

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid have provided guidance to facilities on infection control and prevention of COVID-19 in nursing homes. This guidance is for the health and safety of residents, and it can be helpful for families to know what to expect based on local situations.

- Check with the facility regarding their procedures for managing COVID-19 risk.
- Florida’s Division of Emergency Management Order, [DEM ORDER NO.20-006](#), is limiting most visits to nursing homes and assisted living facilities to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Some exceptions for visitations are made, but you must check with the facility and adhere to a screening and documentation process. [DEM ORDER NO.20-006](#).
- When visitation is not allowed, ask the facility how you can have contact with your family member. Options include telephone calls, video chats, or even emails to check in.
- If your family member is unable to engage in calls or video chats, ask the facility how you can keep in touch with facility staff in order to get updates.

## STAYING HEALTHY

- Pay attention to any fever, flu, or pneumonia-like symptoms and report them to a medical professional immediately.
- Follow current guidance and instruction from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) regarding COVID-19. Tips to keep yourself and your loved ones healthy include the following:



- » Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- » Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- » Stay home when you are sick; work from home.
- » Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- » Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- » Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- » If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- » Always wash hands with soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.

Safe hygiene practices as outlined by the CDC are here: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html)