

# Tips for carers, families and friends of people living with dementia

## For everyone

- Be mindful of the symptoms of coronavirus COVID-19 such as fever, a cough, sore throat, tiredness and shortness of breath. If you display any of these symptoms, contact your doctor for advice or call the Coronavirus Health Information Line for advice on **1800 020 080**.
- Practice proper hygiene:
  - Tips on proper hand washing can be found on the World Health Organisation website here: **[www.who.int/gpsc/clean\\_hands\\_protection/en/](http://www.who.int/gpsc/clean_hands_protection/en/)**
  - If you cannot get to a sink to wash your hands, hand sanitiser or anti-bacterial hand wipes may be a quick alternative.
  - Try to cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue, instead of your hands, and ensure the tissue is discarded in the bin.
  - Make sure that any visitors wash their hands or use hand sanitiser.
  - When cleaning pay attention to things that are handled often, such as remote controls, door handles, taps and phones.
- This is a stressful time for many people in our community. For tips to reduce your stress visit: **[www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak)**
- For the most up to date information and advice about coronavirus visit the Department of Health website: **[www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert](http://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert)**

## **For primary carers**

- It is important to stay connected as much as possible at this time. You may not be able to have visitors but keeping in touch with friends and family over the phone or on Facetime may help.
- We are aware that many social activities and respite programs have been cancelled or limited during this time. Unless you or the person you care for are required to self-isolate you might find it helpful to structure your day and include activities that you and the person you care for enjoy. You may schedule time for a walk, or spending time in the garden, calling a friend or family member, listening to music, reading or watching a television show or movie. The Dementia Australia Library also has a number of e-books and audiobooks available online ([www.dementia.org.au/library](http://www.dementia.org.au/library)).
- If you are required to self-isolate but the person you care for is not living with you, there are some things you can do to continue to support them.
  - It can be helpful to write out an activities care plan if different people are sharing the caring responsibilities. This will ensure that activities are consistent and are suited to the individual. ([www.dementia.org.au/about-dementia/i-am-a-carer-family-member-or-friend/activities-for-people-with-dementia](http://www.dementia.org.au/about-dementia/i-am-a-carer-family-member-or-friend/activities-for-people-with-dementia))
  - Staying in touch via phone, Facetime or Skype can be a good way to show the person living with dementia that you care.
- Contact the **National Dementia Helpline** on **1800 100 500** and encourage other carers to do the same.

## **For family, friends or neighbours**

- Do not visit if you have any signs or symptoms of illness.
- Ask how you can help. If you know someone living with dementia who is self-isolating, you may be able to help with tasks such as grocery shopping, collecting medications or dropping off library books or jigsaw puzzles.
- Many aged care facilities may go into lockdown and restrict visitors in response to coronavirus. These procedures are in place to protect residents from visitors who may be carrying the virus, but as a family member it can be difficult if you are unable to see your loved one.

If you are in this situation you might find it helpful to:

- If you can visit, engage in social distancing of 1.5 metres.
- Bring activities that can be done indoors, such as colouring-in, magazines, folding, sock matching, movies and books.
- If you have children, bring in drawings or artworks from them to show that you are thinking of them.
- Keep in touch. If you can't visit the person, then stay in contact by phone, post, email, FaceTime or Skype. Let the person know that you're thinking of them and encourage others to do so as well.
- Ask staff if they can keep in touch with regular updates if your loved one with dementia isn't able to engage with phone calls.
- If you are concerned about the response to coronavirus of your service provider, speak to them in the first instance. If you are not satisfied with their response, please contact the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission [www.agedcarequality.gov.au/making-complaint](http://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/making-complaint)

## **Where can I get advice about dementia?**

**Dementia Australia's National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500** is available to provide information about dementia. We can also give you tips if you find it difficult to follow the Department of Health advice about coronavirus.

We do not offer personalised medical advice, however we can direct you towards other services and provide support.

## **Ideas for ways to pass the time in self-isolation**

- Staying as active as possible is important. Try some gentle exercises either in a chair or around the house.
- Put plans in place to connect with others, during this difficult time it may need to be over the phone or via video links.
- Participating in activities at home such as reading books and magazines, doing jigsaws, listening to music, knitting, watching tv and listening to the radio may help.

- Consider sensory experiences such as hand, neck and foot massages, hair brushing, smelling flowers from your garden, or a rummage box that contains things that the person has been interested in.
- Why not try some artistic expression? For tips on art at home visit our help sheet: **[www.dementia.org.au/files/helpsheets/Helpsheet-TipsToAssistSocialEngagement04-TipsForArtAtHome\\_english.pdf](http://www.dementia.org.au/files/helpsheets/Helpsheet-TipsToAssistSocialEngagement04-TipsForArtAtHome_english.pdf)**
- If you have an iPad or Android tablet you can download **A Better Visit**. The **A Better Visit** app features a range of two-player games such as Tic Tac Tango, Marble Maze and Gone Fishing designed to enhance communication and facilitate positive social interactions between people with dementia, their carers and families.
- The Dementia Australia Library has a number of e-books and audiobooks available online. Browse our online collection today: **[www.dementia.org.au/library](http://www.dementia.org.au/library)**
- There are also ways to explore the world without leaving the couch. Many museums, theme parks and zoos are available to explore virtually. Some of the many to choose from are:
  - Art and culture lovers can peruse the Guggenheim museum, take a (virtual) walk through national parks or visit the Taj Mahal thanks to Google Arts & Culture: **<https://artsandculture.google.com/>**
  - The Metropolitan Opera in New York City is streaming full performances online for free. You can watch on their website: **[www.metopera.org/user-information/nightly-met-opera-streams/](http://www.metopera.org/user-information/nightly-met-opera-streams/)**
  - Talk a walk around Disney World and Disneyland using Google Maps.
    - Visit Disney World in Orlando, Florida here: **<https://disneyarks.disney.go.com/blog/2018/03/disney-parks-launches-first-ever-360-degree-panoramas-on-google-street-view/>**
    - Visit Disneyland in Anaheim, California here: **[www.google.com/maps/@33.8120336,-117.9189703,3a,30y,347.32h,92.38t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sDelpK5A-dz6kl1K\\_2fSXww!2e0!7i13312!8i6656](https://www.google.com/maps/@33.8120336,-117.9189703,3a,30y,347.32h,92.38t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sDelpK5A-dz6kl1K_2fSXww!2e0!7i13312!8i6656)**

- If you looking for more thrill and adventure, you can also go on a virtual rollercoaster. There are plenty of virtual rollercoaster rides on YouTube. Explore some of the many videos here:  
**[www.youtube.com/channel/UCgQRLYCo3ddB7hE6neK053A](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgQRLYCo3ddB7hE6neK053A)**
- You can see what the baby snow leopards and the penguins are up to at Melbourne Zoo and Werribee Open Range Zoo by watching their live stream: **[www.zoo.org.au/animal-house](https://www.zoo.org.au/animal-house)**
- If you prefer underwater animals you can also tune in to the live stream from the Monterey Bay Aquarium in California, USA to watch the jellyfish, turtles and sea otters:  
**[www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams](https://www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams)**

For further advice contact our **National Dementia Helpline** on **1800 100 500**.

The Centre for Dementia Learning has a comprehensive range of education programs to help aged care providers address many of the issues raised above. For further details contact **1300 DEMENTIA**.

The above information was based on information provided by Alzheimer's Disease Chinese (ADC) and shared by Alzheimer's Disease International. You can find the full presentation here: **[www.alz.co.uk/news/covid-19-sharing-experience-and-advice-from-adis-member-association-in-china](https://www.alz.co.uk/news/covid-19-sharing-experience-and-advice-from-adis-member-association-in-china)**

The coronavirus situation is rapidly evolving. This information is provided as a guide only and may not be appropriate for every situation. For up to date information on the coronavirus, visit **[www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert)**

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