

# Tips for home care providers

## Information for providers of in-home care regarding coronavirus (COVID-19) and supporting people living with dementia.

In addition to the infection control measures aged care providers are implementing in response to coronavirus (COVID-19), the following outlines some considerations for people living with dementia. If you are concerned about the health of a person living with dementia, contact their GP directly.

Some initial suggestions on supporting people impacted by dementia are provided below and more detailed information is available through contacting the **National Dementia Helpline** on **1800 100 500**.

## Tips and strategies

### Reduce heightened anxiety about coronavirus

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- Ensure information provided is from an authoritative source (e.g. Commonwealth Department of Health)
- Minimise the flow of media information by suggesting that clients don't have the 24-hour news cycle on TV
- Use memory aids and visual prompts to explain in a simple way the current situation
- Provide reassurance about the use of masks and personal protective equipment
- Take the time to listen to the person and their concerns

- Validate how the person is feeling
- Provide reassurance
- When time is spent with the person, ask how they are going and if they have any questions
- Try to avoid talking about your own anxieties or concerns in front of your client
- Avoid the use of language such as ‘pandemic’ or ‘crisis’

### **Minimise disruption to service delivery**

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- Maintain usual routines as much as possible
- Where routines cannot be maintained, work with your client (and their families or carers, as appropriate) to identify alternative ways to deliver services
- If you are looking for alternatives to social support, you may wish to consider the following strategies:
  - Encouraging the person living with dementia to consider doing some gentle exercises, either in a chair or around the house
  - Having activities readily available, such as books, magazines, jigsaws, music, knitting, TV and radio programs
  - Going for a gentle walk, spending time in the garden and accessing fresh air and natural light

### **Maintain physical health**

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- People living with dementia may need extra support to maintain proper hand hygiene. The following tips relate specifically to this:
  - Consider placing dementia friendly instructional signs in bathrooms and elsewhere to remind people with dementia to wash their hands with soap for at least 20 seconds.
  - Give a demonstration of thorough hand washing. Consider singing a song to encourage them to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds.

- If the person with dementia cannot get to a sink to wash their hands, hand sanitiser or anti-bacterial hand wipes may be a quick alternative. Hand sanitiser is only effective if hands are not visibly dirty.
- Encourage them to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow, instead of into their hands and ensure the tissue is then discarded in the bin.
- Use prompts and reminders about physical distancing and not leaving the home
- Monitor for flu-like symptoms
- Monitor for changes in behaviour
- If the person you care for becomes unwell and experiences coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, contact coronavirus COVID-19 hotline **1800 675 398** or contact their doctor
- Arrange food and meal deliveries if unable to access shopping without support

### **Reduce social isolation and loneliness**

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- Encourage participating in everyday activities
- Maintain regular routines as much as possible
- Encourage listening to music or audiobooks or other activities that engage the senses
- Encourage family and friends to drop off care packages with letters from family and friends
- Arrange regular check-ins from family or neighbours and share contact numbers if extra support is required
- Use volunteer services to make regular phone calls to the person to check in
- Try to arrange other means of communication- iPad, video calling, skype, phone calls, social media messaging if applicable

- Use technology, such as iPads to access online games and social engagement. Options include 'A better visit' app ([dementialearning.org.au/technology/a-better-visit-app](https://dementialearning.org.au/technology/a-better-visit-app)), a virtual zoo ([zoo.org.au/animal-house](https://zoo.org.au/animal-house)) or virtual museum ([artsandculture.google.com](https://artsandculture.google.com))

### **Recognise and address emerging behaviours**

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- Try to pre-empt the persons needs
- Spend time trying to understand what the person is communicating
- Report changed behaviours that may pose a risk to the person or others to your supervisor
- For further advice contact our contact **National Dementia Helpline** on **1800 100 500**
- Or contact Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service (DBMAS) on **1800 699 799**

### **Supporting clients who are self-isolating**

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- Clarify with your client before entering whether anyone living in the home is self-isolating. Avoid visiting if you are unwell
- For further advice on the approach to in-home care services, see [health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guide-for-home-care-providers](https://health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guide-for-home-care-providers)

Dementia specific information is available by calling 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**. You can also find a wide range of resources at the Dementia Australia library: [dementia.org.au/library](https://dementia.org.au/library)

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](http://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](http://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert)

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