



# TIPS

## for Caring for Someone With Dementia

Dementia is impairment of memory, thinking, and social abilities that is severe enough to interfere with daily life. It indicates problems with at least two brain functions, such as judgment or language. Many dementias are progressive, which means that symptoms are minor at first and worsen over time. The following tips can benefit you if you are caring for someone with dementia.

**Keep the dementia diagnosis in perspective.** A diagnosis of dementia does not signal the end of one's life. It does mean that challenges lie ahead. Not only is a diagnosis of dementia difficult for the person with dementia, it also poses significant challenges for the people who take care of the person with dementia.

**Show respect.** Though trying to communicate with a person who has dementia can be difficult, avoid baby talk and phrases such as "good girl." In addition, avoid talking about the person as if she or he were not present.

**Take things step by step.** When asking the person that you are caring for to do something, do it little by little. Be prepared, too, to repeat things more than once, as the person with dementia may not recall what is being communicated for more than a few minutes.

**Encourage independence.** Let the person with dementia dress herself or himself to whatever degree possible. Arrange their clothes in the order they should be put on to guide the person through the process of getting dressed. Establish routines and stay in familiar environments.

**Make organization a priority.** It may be advantageous to organize belongings so that they will be easy for the person with dementia to find. Always try to put things in the same place. Also, putting labels on doors and drawers can help to keep track of items.

**Go for regular walks.** Exercise is good for the person with dementia and the caregiver. If the person with dementia walks alone, take the proper safety precaution and make sure the person has an ID bracelet with your phone number.

**Try a different approach.** Every person with dementia will have different symptoms and a different rate of progression. Likewise, caregiving techniques should vary according to each individual case of dementia.

**Take stock of your own health.** Even if you are not at risk for dementia as a caregiver, you can help prevent declines in your health later on by not smoking, getting plenty of exercise, eating the right foods, maintaining a healthy weight, and managing health problems, including diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.

*This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at [info@neurologyreviews.com](mailto:info@neurologyreviews.com).*

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