

April 2020

Hi everyone,

At the time of writing this we are in the midst of the Covid19 pandemic and our country wide 3 week lock down. The focus of this newsletter is how the virus will affect people with dementia and their families. With many dementia care homes closed to visitors this is a stressful time for both the dementia patient and the people who would normally be able to visit them. Dementia is not in itself a risk factor for Covid 19 infection but people with dementia could be at higher risk for transmitting infection as well as getting the infection. Their ability to remember all the rules for protecting themselves and others obviously not as good as it could be. Hand washing, which even people with good memories often forget, is a real problem for anyone with significant memory impairment. Covering coughs, too, requires vigilance and executive function. Social distancing is tough to keep in mind for an older person who was looking forward to a loving hug from a visiting relative.

Symptom awareness is another hazard to keep in mind. Someone whose self-awareness is diminished may not recognise the presence of a cough or nausea or might forget to mention an episode of coughing or even vomiting to their nurse or carer.

Due to the lock down our support groups will not be held until it is safe to start them again.

For information related to people with dementia and the virus see the following websites –

www.alzheimers.org.uk

www.alz.org

<https://www.dementiauk.org/get-support/coronavirus-covid-19/>

www.dementia.org.au

www.alzheimers-europe.org

www.gov.za/coronavirus/faq if you think you may be infected call 0800 029 999

Please note that the Western Cape office is open during the lockdown period for telephone counselling.

Alzheimer's SA – Western Cape. Contact Jill Robson on 021 979 2724 or managerwc@alzheimers.org.za
Info can also be found on our website - www.alzheimers.org.za. Our bank account details are - ABSA Sea Point branch, a/c no. 9257483935, Branch Code: 632005 (please use your name as a reference). Section 18 tax certificates are available on request. Leaving a bequest in your will for Alzheimer's South Africa will ensure that we can continue to render our services to families.

Nursing Homes are Showing the World how to Deal with Isolation

By [Jakob Neeland](#). Mar 24, 2020

As the rest of the planet struggles with the concept of changing their habits to minimise risk, aged care workers are providing the blueprint on how to keep calm under pressure.

While emotions of fear and uncertainty are understandable at a time like this, nursing homes around the globe are getting creative with their activities to ensure that residents remain as happy and stress-free as possible during isolation.

One example of this clever thinking comes from an aged care home in Wales that decided to play a real-life version of the iconic Hungry Hippos board game.

Laughter filled the room as residents, who were aged between 80 and 102-years-old, sat in wheelchairs that were being pushed by staff members and competed to see who could capture the most coloured balls using brooms with boxes attached to them.

Bingo is a staple activity in aged care that has been known to bring out the competitive spirit in the most docile of residents.

While the majority of bingo lovers are used to being huddled together as they await their elusive numbers, new social distancing protocols have resulted in a new twist being placed on this activity.

Aged care facilities around the globe are now playing 'Hallway Bingo' which allows residents to participate in the game from the doorway of their own rooms and still maintain a safe distance from other residents.



And if the laughter and passionate cries of "bingo" are anything to go by, residents have easily adapted to the new playing field.

One of the biggest challenges facing aged care providers is maintaining a connection between their residents and the outside world.

Visitors provide both an emotional connection and peace of mind for residents and their family members, as technologies that have historically been shunned by some residents are now proving to be invaluable to maintain contact.

Smartphones and tablets are helping to fill the void created by the ban on in-person visits, by adding the visual element to go along with the voice of a resident's loved one.

A number of aged care staff members are now scheduling in 'virtual visits' for residents on their homes mobile devices while assisting them with applications like Skype and FaceTime.

The value of technology has been on full-show throughout the recent Covid-19 restrictions, but this period of isolation has also seen a resurgence in one of the most time-honoured forms of communication.

Letter writing is giving residents a chance to share their thoughts in a familiar manner that doesn't require an internet connection, and some communities in the US are encouraging kids to write letters to their local aged care residents.

The Laurel View Village aged care home in the US state of Pennsylvania has even come up with a clever way to integrate letter writing with technology, as they have started sharing their residents' "Letters-to-Home" on the facilities' Facebook page.

These posts include photos of residents holding posters and letters that let their families and friends know exactly how they're going.

The current restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent isolation, have forced many of us to reassess what matters, with many families coming to the conclusion that they may have taken previous opportunities for granted.

Hopefully, this trying time gives our planet an increased awareness of the value of seniors, and a newfound respect for those who care for them. During these unprecedented times, Alzheimer's Disease International is bringing together news, resources, stories, advice and support for anyone affected by dementia around the world. Please see their website for more information – www.alz.co.uk

Older people, especially living with dementia, may become more anxious, angry, stressed, agitated, and withdrawn during the outbreak and it is easy to become overwhelmed with the scale and frequency of news updates. For those in quarantine these difficulties may be further exacerbated. Whether you are a person living with dementia, a carer, a healthcare professional, or otherwise, we want to make sure you have information that could help alleviate some of these challenges. We all need to provide and exchange practical and emotional support during this difficult time and ADI's aim is for their website to provide examples of inspiration, shared experience and guidance.

Families find safe ways to connect during nursing home lockouts

By Caroline Egan - HelloCare Editor. Mar 18, 2020

The world has suddenly closed in on the residents of aged care facilities. In Australia, the prime minister has announced tight controls on who can visit and when, and social distancing and infection control measures mean the opportunity for physical and personal closeness is disappearing.

Similar restrictions are in place in aged care homes all over the world.

For those living in aged care, the restrictions must be deeply upsetting. Similarly, for those with loved ones living in aged care, it's a distressing and worrying time.

Not being able to spend time with a loved one can lead to feelings of isolation and despair, especially at this difficult time when there is so much worry about the health and vulnerability of older people.

But hope can rise from adversity, and some families have found creative ways to remain in close physical contact with their loved ones in ways that comply with all the necessary restrictions and bans but allow the sharing of good times while at the same time keeping loved ones safe.

Husband marks 67th years heart-warming tribute -

Bob Shellard was forced to spend he and his wife's 67th wedding anniversary apart. His wife, Nancy, lives in a nursing home and is living with dementia. Coronavirus restrictions mean Mr Shellard is restricted from visiting his wife, so on the weekend he turned up outside her window with balloons and a sign.

'I've loved you 67 years and still do. Happy anniversary,' the sign read.

Ms Shallard waved from her second-storey window and blew kisses to her romantic husband below.

Engagement joy shared with beloved grandfather -



Carly Boyd got engaged a few days ago, but when it came to sharing the news with her friends and family, there was one special person she hated to see missing out – her grandfather.

Ms Boyd's grandfather is living with dementia and lives in a care home. With the help of the staff at the facility where he lives, Ms Boyd was able to share her happy news with her grandfather.

Standing outside his window, she pointed to the ring – and a staff member captured the moment in this lovely photo.

Father and son overcome lockdown -



Sandy Hamilton, an aged care worker from Minnesota, shared a picture on Facebook of a father and son sharing special times together despite a lockdown at his father's aged care facility.

The son has parked a chair outside his father's window, and put his feet up. The two speak on the phone facing each other through the window. The image has been shared more than 840,000 times and received more than 20,000 comments.

"Where there's a will there's a way" one commenter wrote, which just about sums it up.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Tips for Dementia Caregivers

Most likely, dementia does not increase risk for COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the new coronavirus, just like dementia does not increase the risk for flu. However, dementia-related behaviours, increased age and common health conditions that often accompany dementia may increase risk.

For example, people with Alzheimer's disease and all other dementia may forget to wash their hands or take other recommended precautions to prevent illness. In addition, diseases like COVID-19 and the flu may worsen cognitive impairment due to dementia.

Tips for dementia caregivers at home

Caregivers of individuals living with Alzheimer's and all other dementia should follow guidelines from the Centres for Disease Control (CDC), and consider the following tips:

- 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 health care provider for advice. Unless the person is having difficulty breathing or has a very high fever, it is recommended that you call your health care provider instead of going directly to an emergency room. Your doctor may be able to treat the person without a visit to the hospital.
- 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 hand-washing.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be a quick alternative to hand-washing if the person with dementia cannot get to a sink or wash his/her hands easily.
- Ask your pharmacist or doctor about filling prescriptions for a greater number of days to reduce trips to the pharmacy.
- Think ahead and make alternative plans for the person with dementia should adult day care, respite, etc. be modified or cancelled in response to COVID-19.
- Think ahead and make alternative plans for care management if the primary caregiver should become sick.

Tips for caregivers of individuals in assisted living

The CDC has provided guidance on infection control and prevention of COVID-19 in nursing homes. This guidance is for the health and safety of individuals living in long-term or community-based care settings. Precautions may vary based on local situations.

- Check with the dementia care home regarding their procedures for managing COVID-19 risk. Ensure they have your emergency contact information and the information of another family member or friend as a backup.
- Do not visit your family member if you have any signs or symptoms of illness.
- Depending on the situation in your local area, care settings may limit or not allow visitors. This is to protect the residents but it can be difficult if you are unable to see your family member.
- If visitation is not allowed, ask the care setting 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 care setting how you can keep in touch with facility staff in order to get updates.

Staying healthy

Pay attention to flu or pneumonia-like symptoms in yourself and others and report them to a medical professional immediately. Follow current guidance and instruction from the CDC regarding **COVID-19**.

Tips to keep yourself and your loved ones healthy include:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick; work from home.
- If you or the person you are caring for have regular doctor's appointments to manage dementia or other health conditions, call your health care provider to inquire about a telehealth appointment.
- 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.

How to Help Loved Ones with Dementia or Alzheimer's during COVID-19 Outbreak

By [Carolyn Crist](#)



Caregivers who take care of their loved ones with dementia or Alzheimer's have already begun to express their concerns in support groups online: "He hears the news, knows that routines have changed, sees that kids and grandkids are home from school or lost a job, but 'coronavirus' and 'COVID-19' don't register." It can be heart-breaking and difficult to explain this pandemic to your loved ones and know what to do.

Importantly, caregivers should know that dementia doesn't likely increase the risk for COVID-19, says the Alzheimer's Association.

However, dementia-related behaviours, older age and common health conditions that accompany dementia could increase the risk. Those with Alzheimer's disease or dementia may forget to wash their hands or take recommended precautions, such as social distancing, to prevent illness.

"If you're a family caregiver, preventing the spread of illness is important," says Dr. Allison Reiss of the NYU Winthrop Hospital Research Institute and NYU Long Island School of Medicine. "Be prepared, not scared," she says. "Your emotions, your feelings, the atmosphere and energy are communicated to them."

Caregivers should follow additional steps to help their loved ones — and take care of themselves, too. Follow the advice below about communicating and working with your family.

What is the coronavirus?

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the disease known as COVID-19, first began infecting humans in China at the end of 2019. It's a new virus that previously infected animals, so humans don't have a natural immunity yet to fight against the infection. Since the virus spreads through respiratory droplets (from coughing and sneezing) and human-to-human contact (such as handshaking), the CDC has recommended that everyone be cautious.

How do I help my loved ones follow guidelines?

Encourage everyday preventive measures, such as washing hands after touching surfaces. Loved ones with dementia or Alzheimer's may not remember to wash their hands and may have problems with sequencing and moving through the process. Walk through the process with them, saying each step at a time — turn on the water, use the soap dispenser to squeeze out the soap, lather the back of your hands, get between the fingers, scrub under the nails, and wash for 20 seconds.

"Use your hands to model what needs to be done and use a soothing tone," Reiss says. "Sing a favourite song for 20 seconds or use a fragranced soap such as lavender that they may like."

Since frequent handwashing can dry out skin, keep a moisturizer on hand, especially because older loved ones may already have delicate and fragile skin. A non-scented lotion, such as Aquaphor or Eucerin, may help, as well as a lightly scented fragrance that they enjoy.

The CDC recommends that people keep their hands away from their face, so keep yourself and your loved ones busy with activities that involve the hands, such as laundry and towel folding, family albums and puzzles.

"It's very hard not to touch our faces, and sometimes you don't even know you're doing it until you've already touched your face," Reiss says. "Accept that people will touch their faces and just do the best you can with distractions."

Caregivers should also limit exposure to outside visitors, stock a supply of non-perishable foods, ensure that prescriptions are filled, and postpone activities outside of the home during this time. Have a variety of activities on hand to pass the time, such as favourite movies, music and family albums.

How should I explain quarantines?

If the COVID-19 outbreak alters your family's daily routine, especially by limiting personal contact with other family and friends, try to explain the changes in a way that the person with dementia or Alzheimer's can understand.

"Be prepared to repeat this explanation over time as the person may not remember," says Beth Kallmyer, vice president of care and support for the Alzheimer's Association.

Even though the changes may be upsetting — both to you and your loved one — it's important to remain calm, she adds.

"People with dementia will often take their cues from the people around them," she says.

"Reassure the person that the changes are only temporary and that everything will be OK."

My family member is in assisted living. How do I explain why I'm unable to visit?

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many nursing homes and assisted living facilities have closed their in-person visiting hours to family members for a period of time. Talk with the facility about alternative communication methods during the crisis, such as phone calls, video chats or emails, that will help you stay in touch.

Some family members, for instance, have been able to use video to communicate with their loved ones easily. Others may visit the facility and stand outside a window, using the phone to talk to their family members but remain visible. It can be tough to explain these new patterns to loved ones, but it's important to try, Kallmyer says.

"It's important to communicate changes that may cause anxiety or upset a person living with dementia," she says. "If you are unable to visit, let the person know."

Set up a plan and create a new habit. This will help them to grow accustomed to new changes.

"Reassure them that you will keep in touch in other ways," she adds. "The reasons why you can't visit will be secondary and can be explained simply if needed."

If your family member is unable to engage in calls or video chats, ask the facility how you can connect with staff and get health updates.

Coronavirus: Self-isolation when you are affected by dementia

By Jessica Labhart Broadcast Journalist, BBC News

As people are told to stay at home to stem the spread of coronavirus, some living with dementia are struggling to adapt to the change.



Mike Brookes, 77, was diagnosed nine years ago and his wife Liz worries he will be like a "prisoner... with little understanding of what is happening".

Like other families, they have been cut off from outside support.

The Alzheimer's Society said it was "seriously concerned" about self-isolation, but had plenty of advice.

Mr Brookes, an RAF veteran, has been isolating with his 64-year-old wife for three weeks in their home just outside Manchester.

"Mike was an obsessive watcher of the news, but I've had to limit it now because I went into his room and he was in floods of tears," Mrs Brookes said.

"People with dementia may not always understand what's going on but they understand emotions, and that worry and anxiety has been passed on to Mike."

He struggles to remember to wash his hands and not to open the door, Mrs Brookes said, and has had a difficult time adjusting to his new routine.

"We potter around the garden," she said, which helps keep her husband active. He is building a planter so the couple can grow their own vegetables.

The Alzheimer's Society recommends staying active to "fight off boredom and frustration" during the pandemic.

Pat Horriben, who cares for her friend Jane Roberson, said the pair had been going on long walks near their home in Bransford, Worcestershire, to keep busy and active.

The 81-year-olds also "keep up our singing", Ms Horriben said, "to The Carpenters and Simon and Garfunkel". Before the coronavirus outbreak, carers would visit three times a week to wash and dress Ms Roberson, who would also visit a day centre on certain days.

"Now I'm back to doing Jane's personal care full time," Ms Horriben said.

'On your own'

Her friend, a former teacher, was diagnosed with dementia six years ago and has since lost her ability to communicate. "So in these times of isolation, you really are on your own," Ms Horriben said. The friends are supported by the Alzheimer's Society, which advises carers and those living with dementia to keep in touch with loved ones over the phone or online to ease feelings of loneliness.

The charity has also set up an online community for people to talk and share experiences as well as "companion phone calls" where volunteers will call people affected by dementia to help them feel connected.

"Many face being completely cut off from the outside world, potentially their carers, friends and family, causing them huge anxiety and distress," Kathryn Smith, from the Alzheimer's Society, said.

Supporting someone with dementia during the lockdown

- Look after your own mental health
- Arrange deliveries for food, medicine and other essentials
- Stay active to stave off boredom and frustration
- Stay connected to loved ones online or over the phone
- Develop a simple routine to reduce anxiety
- Follow good hygiene, particularly when it comes to hand washing

Feeling cut off was a major concern for Rachel Fearnough. She moved her 75-year-old mum, Diane McDonald, into her home in Scarborough, so she could self-isolate with her family.

She had encouraged her "fiercely independent" mum to move in when she moved to north Yorkshire from Wolverhampton last year, but the former psychiatric nurse refused.

"Isolation has been a big adjustment for her," Ms Fearnough said.

She was concerned that if she continued living independently her sociable mum "would have gone into the village as normal".

"We explain to mum why she's here and what the government has said.

"Sometimes she has glimmers of her old self that comes through and she says 'Yes, I see', but then a few minutes later she says, 'Well I'm off to get a paper', and we have to explain again."

Cleaning windows

Ms McDonald, who lives in the Yorkshire village of Cottingham, loves to keep busy and is more used to caring for others.

Her daughter said: "We have to say, 'Well mum you're here to look after us', and find things for her to do like cleaning the windows and knitting to keep her occupied.

"She loves walking the dog, Hector, too, and I think if we didn't have him it would be a lot more difficult."

The Alzheimer's Society has compiled a list of activity ideas to keep people living with dementia active, but said it was always best to base these on their interests and preferences.

Despite the difficulties, the families are keeping positive.

"We were both war babies," Ms Horriben said. "That sense of people getting on with it, of managing and making the best of things has come back to us so that's what we are doing.

"I'm sure we can get through this together."

2 Ways Too Much Copper Accelerates Alzheimer's

Copper hits the brain with a double-punch. It inhibits clearance of, AND stimulates production of, Alzheimer's plaque

Copper appears to be one of the main environmental factors that trigger the onset and enhance the progression of Alzheimer's disease by preventing the clearance and accelerating the accumulation of

toxic proteins in the brain. That is the conclusion of a study appearing in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.



Copper-rich Foods

Oysters, Beef or lamb liver, Brazil nuts, Blackstrap molasses, Cocoa and Black pepper

Cumulative Effect -

Amyloid beta is a toxic protein that lies at the centre of what goes wrong in Alzheimer's disease. If not properly cleared, or if too much is produced, amyloid plaque accumulates in Alzheimer's, forming a plaque that jams up the brain.

"It is clear that, over time, copper's cumulative effect is to impair the systems by which amyloid beta is removed from the brain," said Rashid Deane, Ph.D., a research professor in the University of Rochester

Medical Center (URMC) Department of Neurosurgery, member of the Center for Translational Neuromedicine, and the lead author of the study. "This impairment is one of the key factors that cause the protein to accumulate in the brain and form the plaques that are the hallmark of Alzheimer's disease."

Copper's presence in the food supply is ubiquitous. It is found in drinking water carried by copper pipes, nutritional supplements, and in certain foods such as red meats, shellfish, nuts, and many fruits and vegetables. The mineral plays an important and beneficial role in nerve conduction, bone growth, the formation of connective tissue, and hormone secretion.

However, the new study shows that copper can also accumulate in the brain and cause the blood brain barrier – the system that controls what enters and exits the brain – to break down, resulting in the toxic accumulation of the protein amyloid beta, a by-product of cellular activity.

Using both mice and human brain cells Deane and his colleagues conducted a series of experiments that have pinpointed the molecular mechanisms by which copper accelerates the pathology of Alzheimer's disease.

The researchers found that the copper made its way into the blood system and accumulated in the vessels that feed blood to the brain, specifically in the cellular "walls" of the capillaries. These cells are a critical part of the brain's defence system and help regulate the passage of molecules to and from brain tissue. In this instance, the capillary cells prevent the copper from entering the brain. However, over time the metal can accumulate in these cells with toxic effect.

The researchers then looked at the impact of copper exposure on mouse models of Alzheimer's disease. In these mice, the cells that form the blood brain barrier have broken down and become "leaky" – a likely combination of aging and the cumulative effect of toxic assaults – allowing elements such as copper to pass unimpeded into the brain tissue. They observed that the copper stimulated activity in neurons that increased the production of amyloid beta. The copper also interacted with amyloid beta in a manner that caused the proteins to bind together in larger complexes creating logjams of the protein that the brain's waste disposal system cannot clear.

This one-two punch, inhibiting the clearance and stimulating the production of amyloid beta, provides strong evidence that copper is a key player in Alzheimer's disease. In addition, the researchers observed that copper provoked inflammation of brain tissue which may further promote the breakdown of the blood brain barrier and the accumulation of Alzheimer's-related toxins.

However, because metal is essential to so many other functions in the body, the researchers say that these results must be interpreted with caution.

"Copper is an essential metal and it is clear that these effects are due to exposure over a long period of time," said Deane. "The key will be striking the right balance between too little and too much copper consumption. Right now we cannot say what the right level will be, but diet may ultimately play an important role in regulating this process."