

Care Partner Information

Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia Caregiving Tips

End-of-Life Care

As someone with dementia nears the end of their life, it can be difficult for care partners to provide all of the care that is needed. Hospice can help.

What is Hospice?

Hospice is special care for people who are dying. Care is provided by nurses, doctors, and others with special training. They can provide care at the person's home. Or, they can give care in a special hospice hospital. They focus on the whole person, including their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. The goal is to keep the person comfortable in the last months and weeks of their life. This helps a person with dementia to enjoy the remainder of their life and also supports care givers.

What Hospice Can Do	
Help plan and coordinate care.	Give care partners a break.
Make sure the patient is comfortable and pain free.	Provide emotional support for the family before their loved one dies.
Answer questions about death and dying.	Provide emotional support for the family even after their loved one has died - often for up to a year.

When to Consider Hospice

Your doctor can help decide if a person with dementia is ready for hospice, but you should starting thinking about hospice early. Consider hospice when a person with dementia can't do their day-to-day activities. They do not have to be bed-bound to get help from hospice.

It is better to start hospice care sooner, rather than later. It can improve comfort and pleasure with life for both patients and their families. Most insurance plans, including Medicare, cover hospice care for free. Your own doctor can give care along with the hospice staff.

This Care Partner Information page is part of a series on caregiving tips. They are written to help family and community caregivers, direct care workers and community health representatives care for someone with Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia. Available in English and Spanish at www.aging.arizona.edu

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Important Conversations

As dementia gets worse, it is hard for a person to think and talk. So before dementia get too bad, you should talk to the person about important things. These are things like what kind of care they want, where they want to die, and any special wishes.

Talking about end-of-life issues is often hard, but it can bring peace of mind and reduce stress.

Topics for Important Conversations	
What to expect as dementia gets worse	Money
What type of care the person wants and doesn't want	Organ donation
Where the person wants to live and where they want to die	Funeral plans

Legal Documents Everyone Should Have

There are important documents (paperwork) that everyone should have. They help others to take care of you if you can't take care of yourself. If you move, make sure your documents are legal in your new state.

Type of Document	What It Is For
Power of Attorney	Names one person to manage your personal affairs and money if you can't do it.
Medical Power of Attorney	Names one person to make medical decisions for you if you can't do it yourself. Have an alternate person.
Mental Health Power of Attorney	Names one person to make mental health decisions for you if you can't do it yourself. Have an alternate person.
Advance Directives / Living Will	States what kind of medical care you want. It covers things like whether you want CPR.
Will	States what you want done with your money and belongings after you die.

Useful Websites

Hospice Foundation of America: <http://hospicefoundation.org/>

National Institute on Aging: <http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/end-life-helping-comfort-and-care/>

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