

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS”

In the Hospital with Alzheimer's

Being in the hospital is especially difficult for someone with Alzheimer's (AD). You will have to make special efforts to keep the person in your care safe and comfortable in the hospital. While it may be best if you are there, you also need to take care of yourself. Find friends and relatives who can take your place at the bedside so you can get an occasional rest.

How a Hospital Experience Feels

It is not surprising that some people with AD feel frightened, confused and agitated in the hospital. Because they may not understand what is happening to them, they may become aggressive and uncooperative:

- they find it stressful to be around strange people
- they become upset when their normal daily routine is disrupted—the patient is expected to adjust to the schedule of the hospital
- they may undergo painful treatments and examinations without understanding why
- they may misinterpret what is being done to them and feel attacked or threatened
- it is natural that a sick person will not handle stress well; when the person has dementia, his reactions are usually more extreme

Special Help Needed

Be aware that a person with AD may need help with some basic activities that go on in the hospital. He may not be able to find the bathroom or realize that he needs help while there; it is best if he not go alone.

He may not know how to use the call button or remember that it is there. He may not remember to follow dietary restrictions or know how to fill out the menu. He might need help eating. For reasons like these, it is best if the person with AD has someone with him at the hospital as much as possible.

If the person with AD is well enough to get up and walk around be careful that he does not wander and get lost. Again, the best way to keep him safe is to keep him under supervision at all times. It is during the night that people with AD often need the most support. You may need to consider hiring help for the wee hours if no one is able to stay with the person overnight.

Check to see that medications for AD are still being administered, unless there is a medical reason to discontinue them. While they may not be a priority in terms of the acute illness that brought the person to the hospital, they are important for continued Alzheimer's care.



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Reducing Stress in the Hospital

You can do a great deal to help reduce the stress the person with dementia is feeling. One of the most important things you can do is to stay with him as much as possible. You know best how to calm and communicate with him and can help the staff to understand his reactions.

Be sure to tell the hospital staff that your relative has dementia. Because information does not always get passed from shift to shift, you should tell any staff members you haven't seen before about his dementia and about what his normal behavior is like. Try to develop a working relationship with the staff so that your role of advocate (supporter) will be more effective.

As the caregiver to a person with AD, you have to be able to speak for the person with the hospital staff. Do not be afraid to ask for a second opinion. The doctors will understand that you need as much information as you can get when making decisions for someone else.

Let the staff know that you want to be regularly informed about the medical plan and the medications given to your care receiver. A person with Alzheimer's disease will not be able to know if he is getting the correct medication. Set up times to meet with the doctor so that you can get and give feedback on the person's progress. The hospital social worker will be able to help you make these arrangements.

Try to arrange a room in the quietest place on the floor. If he must share a room with another patient, explain to that person and his family that he has dementia and may not be able to follow the regular rules of etiquette. If the roommate has frequent visitors who upset the person in your care, it may be necessary to request a room or roommate change.

When it is time to go home, a discharge planner should meet with you to develop a discharge plan. You may need to work to get the resources that will be needed to continue the person's recovery. Keep in mind that caregiving will be more difficult when he comes home and you will need your strength to meet these additional demands.

Occasionally people with dementia are hospitalized in the psychiatric ward of a hospital because their behavioral symptoms are getting worse in spite of dedicated and compassionate home care or medication. Many of the suggestions will also be helpful in the psychiatric unit.

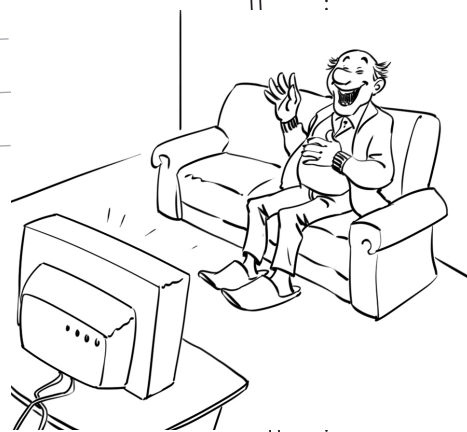
Source: Caregiving in The Comfort of Home for Alzheimer's



Taking Care of Yourself—Do You Need A Break?

It is stressful when the person in your care is in the hospital. Spouse caregivers have special problems as they gradually lose the emotional support of the partner who is ill and must now be his or her emotional as well as physical support. It is especially important for spouse caregivers to seek out a support system and control emotions by releasing anger, fear and frustration in a safe way

- ✓ Take a walk to cool down, preferably in nature.
- ✓ Spend 15 minutes in meditation.
- ✓ Share your feelings with a trusted friend.
- ✓ Watch a comedy on TV.
- ✓ Practice daily gratitude.



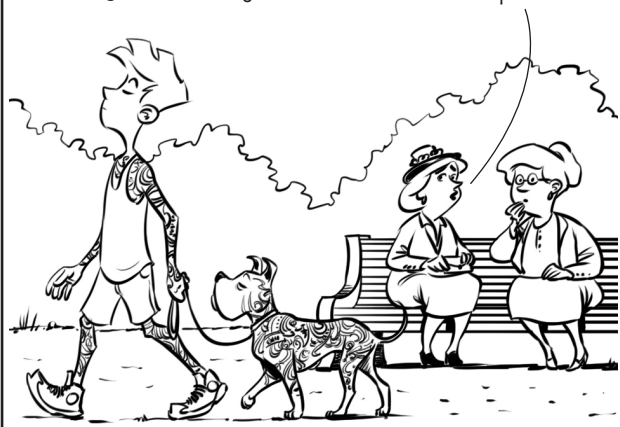
Inspiration

It is much more important to know what kind of patient has the disease, than what kind of disease the patient has.

~ William Osler, M.D.

Live Life Laughing!

Look at those doggie tattoos!
I guess he just ran out of space.



Memory Care

Guard rails on the bed may sometimes be helpful supports when getting in and out of bed, but may also add to the risk of falls if the person attempts to climb over them. A bed cane may turn out to be a safer alternative. It can offer support and increase balance. It is like a grab bar, with a wooden base that fits between the mattress and the box spring.

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Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

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SAFETY TIPS— How to Watch Out for Someone's Best Interests in the Hospital

In the hospital a person with dementia is at greater risk than others, so be ready to keep tabs on treatments, ask questions, and act as an advocate. If you are having a problem in the hospital that you cannot resolve, you may get additional support from the *Patient Representative*. The representative will be familiar with hospital procedures and may be able to help you to get what you need or explain why it is not possible.

A hospital must release patients in a safe manner or else must keep them in the hospital. Letting a patient leave the hospital is not wise if the person has constant fever, infection or pain that cannot be controlled; confusion and excess disorientation suggesting delirium, a common problem in people with dementia (no sense of time or place); or is unable to take food and liquids by mouth. However, in some cases, it may be better for the person to be released because the noise and risk of catching other diseases may make it more difficult to recover. If you plan to appeal a discharge, understand the rules of Medicare, Medicaid, the HMO, or insurance plans.

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“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U . . . C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

Q U I C K Q U I Z

Sometimes hospitalization provides a chance to rethink the care plan for the person with AD. If the level of dementia has increased as a result of the hospitalization, you will have to know what additional resources you need or other housing options you should consider. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. A person with AD may need help with some basic activities that go on in the hospital.
T F
2. Because a person with AD may not understand what is happening to them, they may become aggressive and uncooperative in the hospital.
T F
3. There is not much you can do to help reduce the stress the person with dementia is feeling during a hospital stay.
T F
4. The person with AD becomes upset when his normal daily routine is disrupted—the patient is expected to adjust to the schedule of the hospital.
T F
5. As the caregiver, you know best how to calm and communicate with him and can help the hospital staff understand his reactions.
T F
6. People with dementia are never hospitalized in the psychiatric ward of a hospital because their behavioral symptoms are getting worse.
T F
7. A hospital must release patients in a safe manner or else must keep them in the hospital.
T F
8. Guard rails on the bed may sometimes be helpful supports when getting in and out of bed, but may also add to the risk of falls if the person attempts to climb over them.
T F
9. A person with AD may misinterpret what is being done to him in the hospital and feel attacked or threatened.
T F
10. It is less upsetting to the patient to arrange a room in the quietest place on the floor.
T F

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____