



**Alzheimer's Disease
International**

The global voice on dementia

**Advice for carers,
humanitarian
agencies,
communities and
people living with
dementia during
times of crisis**



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Help identify people living with dementia

*Advice for carers, humanitarian agencies, communities, local agencies and
people living with dementia*



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It can be helpful to know who needs help

It is important that others, including healthcare responders and humanitarian aid services, know someone is living with dementia in order to best support and care for them, especially in the case of separation.



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Update mobile information

If already being helped by humanitarian or healthcare responders, alert them to person's condition.

If the person has access to a smartphone, store medical information and updated emergency contact information.



Write down information

If the person does not have access to a mobile phone, write down information on a piece of paper, including their name, emergency contact information and information signalling that they are living with dementia.

Place this piece of paper in a wallet, pocket or somewhere it will not get lost or damaged.



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Clear communication is vital

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Use clear communication

Speak clearly, calmly and in shorter, simpler sentences to explain what is happening or when giving instructions.
Make eye contact.

Use the person's name or relation to
you.

Be patient while giving person time to
process what is being said.



Examples of clear communication

Instead of saying: "You cannot be by the window right now because you might get hurt."

Try saying: "**Name-of-person**, we are going to move to **name-of-location** (e.g., **basement, outside**). We can return later."



Examples of clear communication

Instead of saying: "We are going to be staying in this shelter for a while because we cannot return home yet."

Try saying: "**Name-of-person**, we are in/at **name-of-place**. This is a safe place. You are safe. We will go home soon."



Examples of clear communication

Instead of saying: "We need to leave because we are in danger if we stay here."

Try saying: "**Name-of-person**, we are going to leave **name-of-place** (e.g., **bedroom, home, shelter**). We are going to go to **name-of-place**. I am right here. You are safe."



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Body language

Consider own body language and gestures when trying to convey information.

Non-verbal communication is an important way for a person living with dementia to communicate and express their feelings.



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Examples of body language

It may help to hold or stroke the hand of the person as warm, physical contact can be reassuring.

Smiling can also be reassuring.

If possible, speak face-to-face so they can focus on your facial expression.



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Guidance and support

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Extra guidance and support

People living with dementia can have atypical reactions to crises and may need extra support and guidance to prepare, protect and recover from emergency situations.

Some people with dementia may resist leaving dangerous environments because they cannot comprehend the threat they face.



Extra guidance and support

If a person is unwilling to leave an unsafe environment, **do not try** to reason or use logic as to why they should leave, as it may scare and confuse the person more.

Suggest that you need their company to go somewhere else that is familiar to them and that you will return soon.



Example of conversation

Instead of saying: "We need to leave **name of place** because we could may get hurt if we stay any longer."

Try saying: "**Name-of-person**, will you come with me to **familiar name-of-place**? We will return soon."



Responding to distressed behaviours

A person with dementia may display signs of anxiety or stress due to changes in their external environment.

If possible, remove any loud or intrusive sounds. Provide ear plugs or headphones.

Providing a distraction, such as asking them to share a story from the past, can help to alleviate feelings or behaviours of distress.



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Explain the situation to outside help

It's important to be patient, remain calm and explain clearly when speaking with or caring for the person with dementia.

If others are helping you to care for a person living with dementia, emphasise why the person may need more time to process information or the situation.



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Plan according to mobility

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Prioritise mobility devices and support

If the person with dementia has mobility challenges, plan support, such as securing walking aids, including frames, sticks and chairs.

If with others or in the care of a larger group, alert others that you may need help in assisting the person in case of sudden need to evacuate.



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Food, drink and hygiene

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Reminders to eat and drink

Disruption of routine and day-to-day tasks can be difficult for people with dementia. These tasks and actions can become even more difficult during humanitarian emergencies.

Remind or assist the person living with dementia to continue with regular eating and drinking where possible.



Eat nutrient-rich food when possible

Include or seek out nutrient-rich foods where available, as micronutrient deficiencies can have severe consequences for older people's mental and physical health, immune system and overall functional abilities.

This can impair survival and recovery from crisis, particularly for people living with dementia.



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Practice hygiene

Assist with activities related to hygiene, such as brushing teeth and washing hands where possible.



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Carer safety and wellbeing

Advice for carers of people living with dementia



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Prioritise carer wellbeing

Carer safety and wellbeing is just as important as that of the person living with dementia.

It is important to eat, drink and rest whenever possible.



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Practice self-care

Try breathing techniques, such as inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth.

If available, share caring responsibilities with another person. Step away and take breaks when possible.



Practice self-care

It can help to speak to somebody else
and share what you are or have
experienced.

Writing down your feelings, either on
a piece of paper or somewhere on
your mobile phone, may also help.