



HOMES AND COMMUNITY-BASED SETTINGS

Many businesses and community organizations suspended or changed operations because of government emergency orders. Both people living with dementia and their caregivers have been affected by the suspension of adult day services, social events, congregate meals, respite care, peer support groups, community education, physical activity classes, and more. Other services are available through virtual delivery, such as non-urgent primary care, case management, and behavioral health.

KNOW THE FACTS

- » About 70% of people living with dementia reside in community settings, with 26% living alone.
- » 30% of older adults with dementia living in the community rely on 3 or more unpaid caregivers.
- » 95% of people with dementia have one or more additional chronic conditions, and cognitive impairment tends to complicate management and treatment of these other conditions.
- » Nearly one-third of caregivers to persons with dementia provide 20+ hours of unpaid care per week.
- » 6 in 10 people with dementia will wander, which can be dangerous.

COVID-19 CHALLENGES

- » People living with dementia may have difficulty adapting to disrupted routines. Wandering, confusion, and disorientation may increase.
- » Caregivers may receive less or irregular outside assistance, adding to already-high levels of caregiver strain.
- » Risk of exposure to coronavirus increases if hygiene and sanitation practices are inconsistent. People with dementia may not always remember how to thoroughly wash hands, and caregivers may lack the time to sanitize the home. Also, home health and personal care aides may not have personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect themselves and others in the home.
- » Adhering to care plans for other chronic conditions may become problematic. For conditions managed with diet and/or physical activity, persons with dementia may be unable to identify substitutes for scarce special diet materials or canceled physical activity programs. Distant caregivers may be unable to consistently manage medications, monitor health (e.g., blood glucose levels, sleep), and adjust care as needed. Also, cognitive impairment may impede learning how to use telemedicine and other virtual services.
- » Social isolation may be acute among persons and families dealing with dementia, a condition that already tends to isolate people due to stigma, deterioration of communication skills, and many hours spent caregiving.
- » Neglect, abuse, and exploitation may not be detected early if adult protective services (APS) cannot maintain a sufficient workforce of COVID-trained staff.

PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

- » Ensure caregivers have plans in place for additional support if they become unable to provide care, including situations in which the caregiver has an unplanned hospitalization. Also, encourage neighbors to offer assistance to neighbors.
- » Distribute the Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline (see callout box) to community members, health care and community service professionals, and first responders to access the latest expert guidance. The Helpline also can direct callers to a wide array of programs and services, including virtual support groups.
- » Coordinate with law enforcement to review, and update as needed, protocol for persons with dementia who are wandering to minimize potential COVID-19 exposures.
- » Offer training and PPE to professional and unpaid caregivers to help reduce potential transmission when providing in-home care and assisting with essential errands.
- » Educate caregivers about filling medication prescriptions by mail order or delivery and in greater quantities for both the person with dementia and others in the household.
- » Help community organizations, especially those with ties to underserved populations, to use technology to host peer support groups, social events, and more. Such efforts will need to consider user access to devices, broadband, and technical support.

Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline 800.272.3900

This free service provides confidential support and information to people living with dementia, caregivers, care and emergency response professionals, and the public in over 200 languages.

RESOURCES

Alzheimer's Association

Tips for home-based dementia caregivers

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Guidance and resources related to older adults

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Portal for health departments

Unless otherwise noted, all facts and statistics come from the 2020 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report available at alz.org/facts.

alz.org/publichealth-covid19 • cdc.gov/aging/covid19 • Contacts: [Molly French](#) or [John Shean](#), Public Health Department

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