

Activities to keep people entertained in the home

Many community services have temporarily closed day-programs during the current coronavirus pandemic. This will reduce physical contact and ensure the safety of people living with chronic health conditions such as dementia. If you need additional respite, contact your service and ask if they can provide one-on-one inhome care and outings in the community to assist you and the person you care for during this time.

Home entertainment

If you are spending more time at home with your love-one with a cognitive impairment or dementia, you may be looking for ways to entertain both of you. Activities may not need special items or be complex. Consider:

Daily routines:

- **Chores:** Dusting, sweeping decks, hanging washing.
- **Mealtime:** Preparing food, cooking, eating.
- **Personal care:** Showering, shaving, dressing.

Other activities may include:

- **Creative:** Colouring in, playing the guitar.
- **Intellectual:** Reading a book together, doing puzzles.
- **Physical:** Taking a walk, throwing a ball or balloon.
- **Social:** Having coffee at an outside table, talking, playing cards.
- **Spiritual:** Praying, spending time in nature.
- **Spontaneous:** Going for a drive, talking to a neighbour over the fence.
- **Work-related:** Making lists, reorganising tool boxes or the kitchen cutlery drawer.

Planning activities that focus on the person:

- **What are the person's tastes, strengths, abilities and interests?**
As dementia progresses, expect to make adjustments.
- **Keep the person's skills and abilities in mind.** Stick with activities the person has always enjoyed. Adjust, as needed, to match your loved-one's current abilities and change activities if their tastes change.
- **Pay attention to what the person enjoys.** Take note when the person seems happy, anxious, distracted or irritable. Some people enjoy watching sports, while others may be frightened by the fast pace or noise.
- **Does the person begin activities without direction?** Do they set the table before dinner



10 TIPS for activities at home

1. Be flexible and patient.
2. Encourage involvement in daily life.
3. Avoid correcting the person.
4. Help the person remain as independent as possible.
5. Offer opportunities to make choices.
6. Simplify instructions.
7. Establish a familiar routine.
8. Respond to the person's feelings.
9. Simplify, structure and supervise.
10. Provide encouragement and support.



The Byron carer

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Byron Shire Respite Service is located at the Brunswick Valley Community Centre, South Beach Rd, Brunswick Heads.

www.byronrespite.com.au

Our incorporated non-government community based organisation is managed by a local committee and covers the shires of Byron, Ballina and Lismore.

NDIS Registered Provider

Respite care is delivered through our Flexible Respite, Day Respite and Social Support projects, with a person centred enablement approach across the respite continuum.

Telephone Nicole on: 02) 6685 1619
or Janine on: 02) 6685 1629

Email: service@byronrespite.com.au



Byron Shire Respite Service acknowledge and pay respect to the Arakwal people of the Bundjalung nation, the traditional owners of the land on which we live and care – and pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging.

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or sweep the kitchen floor mid-morning? If so, perhaps these activities can be incorporated into your daily routine.

- **Be aware of physical difficulties.** Does the person tire quickly? Or do they have difficulty seeing, hearing or performing simple movements? If so, avoid challenging activities that require these skills.

Modify your home environment

Make activities safe. Remove dangerous materials and tools from a workshop so an activity like sanding a piece of wood can be enjoyable and safe.

Change your surroundings. Place scrapbooks, photo albums or old magazines in easily accessible spots to encourage the person to reminisce.

Minimise distractions. Certain settings, even if in a familiar place surrounded by familiar sounds, can be upsetting to a person living with dementia. Minimising distractions can help prevent uneasiness.

Choosing the right activity

Focus on enjoyment, not achievement. Choose activities that build on current skills. A professional artist might become frustrated over a declining quality of work, but a beginner might enjoy new opportunities for self-expression.

Encourage involvement in daily life. Tasks like wiping kitchen benches and emptying rubbish bins can provide a sense of accomplishment and help the person feel like an active and valued member of the home.

Relate activity to work life A former office worker might enjoy activities that involve organising, like putting coins in a holder or making a to-do list. A former farmer or

gardener may like working in the backyard.

Look for favourites. A person who has always read the newspaper may still enjoy looking through our locally delivered papers, even if they can no longer fully understand the content.

Change activities as needed. Try to be flexible and acknowledge the person's changing interests and abilities.

Time of day. Caregivers may find they have more success with certain activities at specific times of day, such as showering when it's warmer. Change routines as needed.

Adjust activities to disease stages. As the disease progresses, you may want to introduce more repetitive tasks. Be prepared for the person to eventually be less active.

Your approach to activities

Offer support and supervision. You may need to show the activity first and provide step-by-step directions.

Concentrate on the process, not the result. Try to focus on what matters: spending time together and helping the person feel useful.

Be flexible. If the person insists that he or she doesn't want to do something, it may be because of inability or fear. If the person insists on doing something a different way, let them and correct any mistakes later, if necessary.

Be realistic and relaxed. Avoid filling every minute with an activity.

Dementia-related behaviors, increased age and common health conditions that often accompany dementia may increase risk for contracting viruses.

For example, people with 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.

For people living with dementia, increased confusion is often the first symptom of any illness. If the person with dementia shows rapidly increased confusion, contact your GP or call Healthdirect on 1800 022 222 for advice.

The Australian Government's Department of Health is closely monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic. They provide daily updates, answer your questions about the latest news, current facts and figures, travel advice, key contact and phone numbers. Visit the website at <https://www.health.gov.au>



Dementia and COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

According to the Alzheimer's Association (USA), 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 to the person. Alcohol-based hand sanitiser 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 their hands easily.

- Think ahead and make alternative plans for the person with dementia should in-home respite or family visits be modified or cancelled in response to COVID-19.
- 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 care if you should become sick.

Like you, the person living with dementia needs a balance of activity and rest, and may need frequent breaks.

Help get the activity started. Many people living with the disease still have the energy and desire to do things but lack the ability to organize, initiate and complete tasks.

Break activities into simple, easy-to-follow steps. Focus on one step at a time. Too many directions at once can be overwhelming.

Assist with difficult parts of the task. If you're cooking and the person can't measure the ingredients, finish the measuring and encourage a different task, such as stirring.

Let the person know they are needed. Ask: "Will you please help me?" Be careful not to make too many requests.

Make the connection. If you ask the person to make a card, he or she may not respond. But if you say that you're creating a special get-well card for a friend, the person may agree to participate.

Don't criticise or correct. Even if the person enjoys an activity that seems insignificant or purposeless to you — encourage them to continue.

Encourage self-expression. Include activities that allow an outlet for expression, such as painting, drawing, dancing or listening to music.

Engage through conversation. While you're polishing shoes, washing the car or cooking dinner, explain what you're doing. Even if the person cannot respond, he or she can benefit from the interaction.

Substitute an activity for a behaviour If a person with dementia is rubbing the table, provide a cloth and encourage the person to wipe it. Or, if he or she is moving their feet on the floor, play music to encourage tapping to the beat.

Try again later If an activity doesn't interest the person, it may be the wrong time of day or the activity may be too complicated. Try again later or adapt accordingly. Most importantly, look for activities that are easily accessible, inexpensive, and also give you — the all important carer, pleasure.

To read the original transcript of this article, please visit: <https://www.alz.org>

Need support?

- **Australian Government Department of Health** For more information about novel coronavirus (2019-nCov), call the Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080 or www.health.gov.au
- **Carer Gateway** telephone: 1800 422 737 for information about planned and emergency respite and other carer supports. www.carergateway.gov.au
- **My Aged Care** telephone: 1800 200 422 for information about the Australian Government's aged care system and services. www.myagedcare.gov.au

If you require emergency respite, please call:

1800 059 059 (24hrs)

Far North Coast Commonwealth Respite & Carelink Centre

- **Telephone Nicole at Byron Shire Respite Service Inc. to discuss your role as a carer.** telephone: 02) 6685 1619
- **National Dementia Helpline** telephone: 1800 100 500
- **Carers Counselling Service** telephone: 02) 6628 6416
- **Carers NSW** telephone: 1800 242 636
- **Sandra Kimball Counselling** telephone: 0458 175 962
- **National Continence Helpline** telephone: 1800 330 066
- **NSW Elder Abuse Helpline** telephone: 1800 628 221

Aids:

- **Byron Ballina Home Maintenance and Modification Service 1/65 Centennial Circuit, Byron Bay** telephone: 02) 6685 7312
- **Bright Sky Cards for Continence Aids Payment Scheme (CAPS)** telephone: 1300 886 601

Need Transport?

- **Byron Shire Respite Service** can assist with transport to medical appointments. Telephone Janine: 02) 6685 1629
- **Byron Shire Limousines** telephone: 02) 6685 5008 Travel for medical appointments free with travel voucher or for Veteran and Widow Gold Card holders
- **Brunswick Limousines** telephone David on: 0412 855 747
- **Tweed Byron Ballina Community Transport** telephone: 1300 875 895 Tweed Byron Ballina Community Transport provide transport to medical appointments, weekly & fortnightly shopping outings & monthly social outings. The service is funded to support older people living at home independently or have a permanent disability or Indigenous Australians aged over 50 years. Phone Kathryn in the Byron office on: 1300 875 895 for transport to medical appointments or Amanda for any shopping bus or social bus enquiries.

Create a daily plan for the person with dementia

Planning a day can make things easier for carers. It may help you spend less time and energy figuring out what to do. There may be times when a variety of activities are required and others when following a routine is best. Try to find enjoyable activities for the person with dementia that provide meaning and purpose.

Keeping a daily journal might help:

- Which activities worked best and why?
- Which activities didn't work?
- Were there times with too much going on or too little to do?
- Were spontaneous activities enjoyable or did they create anxiety and confusion?

Allow flexibility for spontaneous activities and rest.

Measuring your daily plan's success:

To determine if the daily plan is working, consider your loved-one's response to each activity. The success of an activity may vary from day to day. In general, if they seem bored, distracted or irritable, it may be time to introduce another activity or take a break. Structured and pleasant activities can often reduce agitation and improve mood. Remember, the type of activity and how well it's completed is not as important as the joy and sense of accomplishment your family member gets from doing it.



To read the original transcript of this article and find more great tips to help you care for a person living with dementia, please visit: <https://www.abz.org>

Sample Daily Plan

MORNING

- Wash, brush teeth, get dressed
- Prepare and eat breakfast
- Have a conversation over coffee
- Discuss the newspaper, try a craft project, reminisce over old photos
- Take a break, have some quiet time
- Do some chores
- Take a walk or play a game.

AFTERNOON

- Prepare and eat lunch, read mail, wash dishes
- Listen to music, do word-finding puzzles, watch TV
- Do some gardening, take a walk, facetime friends
- Take a short break or nap.

EVENING

- Prepare and eat dinner, clean the kitchen
- Talk over a warm drink or dessert
- Play cards, watch a movie, give a massage
- Have a shower, get ready for bed, read a book.

BYRON SHIRE RESPITE SERVICE

Byron Shire Respite Service Inc.
is supported by the Australian
Government Department of Health.
Visit www.health.gov.au

Our Vision Statement:

*With a focus on caring
wellness and reablement
provide person centred support
to people with diverse needs to
enhance their quality of life and
maintain a familiar lifestyle
in the community
and in their own homes.*



Although funding for the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) has been provided by the Australian Government, the material contained herein does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Australian Government.