

Great free resource for carers

Recent natural disasters have highlighted the need to be prepared. Carers of people with dementia can prepare by thinking carefully about how best to help them and protect both themselves and the person from harm.

The **Carers Ready Guide** has been prepared by the Dementia Collaborative Research Centre, Carers and Consumers, Queensland University of Technology (QUT), with input from an expert panel of carers of people with dementia and emergency services workers.



According to QUT's School of Nursing lead researcher Doctor Linda Schnitker 'For carers of people with dementia, there is an extra layer of anxiety and potential danger. They need to consider how to best help the person they care for and also protect themselves from harm.'

This Carer Ready Guide can help you think about these issues. You should read this guide when completing your **Red Cross RediPlan** which can also be downloaded by visiting: <https://www.redcross.org.au>.

The **Carer Ready Guide** has three colour-coded sections with relevant dementia:

Section 1: Preparing for a Natural Disaster

Section 2: During a Natural Disaster

Section 3: After a Natural Disaster

Section 1 Preparing for a Natural Disaster includes information to:

Plan Ahead

- Advice and tips for being prepared for an emergency.

Get Connected

- Advice for getting connected to your community to protect yourself and the person you are caring for.

Get Organised

- Advice and tips for organising the things that will help you gain a sense of control during and after an emergency.

Get Packing

- Advice and tips for preparing practically for an emergency.

Section 2: During a Natural Disaster includes information:

If You Stay at Home During a Natural Disaster

- Advice that may help you prepare yourself, the person you are caring for and your home in case you have to stay at home during a disaster or unable to leave.

If You Stay at Home During a Natural Disaster

- Advice and tips that may help if you and the person you are caring for have to evacuate.

If You Need to Evacuate

- Advice in case the person you are caring for becomes separated from you or lost during an emergency.

If the Person You Care for Becomes Lost

If the Person With Dementia Becomes Agitated

- Advice if the person you are caring for becomes distressed, anxious, agitated and confused during a disaster

Section 3: After a Natural Disaster includes information on:

Returning Home

- Advice for returning home after a disaster

Psychological Support

- Advice for getting psychological support for both the person with dementia and you as a carer.

To read, download and print your **16 page carer Ready Guide**

with lots of great information, visit: <http://dementiakt.com.au/resource/carers-ready-guide>



The Byron carer

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

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.



Join the fun! Visit our friends at the Byron Community Centre, 69 Jonson Street, Byron Bay Tuesday the 18th of February from 10:30am for a one day event of seniors activities open for all members of our senior community. Telephone Pippy on 02) 6658 6807 or email seniors@byroncentre.com.au for more details.



Create an emergency plan for the whole family

It is also a good idea to make an emergency plan for your entire household.

Red Cross's 8 page RediPlan includes areas to note important emergency, such as contacts and services during an emergency, alternative places you might choose to stay during an emergency, contacts for neighbours, medical plan, existing medical conditions, medications taken, insurance, important items within the house and plan to protect them and animals included in your household's emergency plan.

The Red Cross RediPlan can be downloaded to your computer and includes fields that can be typed into before printing, or you can print it out before handwriting onto it.

To access the free Red Cross RediPlan, visit: <https://www.redcross.org.au/prepare>

Older people or people with dementia and problems with eating and drinking

Eating and drinking well is important for staying healthy. A healthy diet is likely to improve a person's quality of life. According to Dementia UK, not eating enough can lead to weight loss and other problems including fatigue, higher risk of infection and less muscle strength.

People with dementia may become dehydrated if they are unable to communicate or recognise that they are thirsty, or if they forget to drink. This can lead to headaches, increased confusion, urinary tract infection and constipation. These can make the symptoms of dementia worse.

While a healthy, balanced diet is important, in the later stages of dementia the most important thing is making sure the person with dementia takes on nutrition, and a higher-calorie diet from a dietitian may be appropriate.

Why might someone lose their appetite?

There are many reasons why a person may lose interest in, or turn down, food and drink, such as:

Depression - Loss of appetite can be a sign of depression. Depression is common in people with dementia. There are effective treatments for depression, including medication and other therapies. If you suspect that the person you care for has depression, consult your GP.

Communication - The person may have problems communicating that they are hungry or that they don't like the food they have been given. They may communicate their needs through

behaviour. For example, they may refuse to eat or hold food in their mouth. Giving people a choice of food or using prompts and pictures may help.

Pain - People with dementia may not be able to communicate their discomfort. They may have problems with their dentures, sore gums or painful teeth. Oral hygiene and regular mouth checks are important.

Tiredness - This can also be a cause of people not eating or giving up part way through a meal. It can also lead to other difficulties such as problems with concentration or difficulties with co-ordination. It's important to be aware of this and support the person to eat when they are most alert.

Medication - Changes to medication or dosage can result in appetite changes. If you think this may be the case, speak to your GP.

Physical activity - If the person is not very active during the day, they may not feel hungry. Encouraging them to be active will be good for their wellbeing and may increase their appetite. Equally, if the person is very active or restless (walking about or fidgeting) they may use extra calories and need to eat more to replace them.

Constipation - This is a common

problem and can result in the person feeling bloated or nauseous, making them less likely to want to eat. Try to prevent constipation by encouraging activity, offering the person fibre-rich foods and providing plenty of fluids. If constipation becomes a problem for the person, speak to your GP.

Tips for encouraging appetite

There are lots of ways to increase a person's appetite and interest in food and drink. Knowing the person will help, as everyone has their own routines, preferences and needs. You will also have a better idea about their likes and dislikes. It's also important to think about what they can physically manage.

- Make food look and smell appealing. Use different tastes, colours and smells. The aroma of cooking - for example, freshly baked bread - can stimulate someone's appetite.

- Look for opportunities to encourage the person to eat. For example, if the person with dementia is awake for much of the night then night-time snacks may be a good idea.

- Give the person food they like. Try not to overload the plate with too much food - as often small and regular portions often work best.

- Try different types of food or drinks,

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.

such as milkshakes or smoothies.

- Food tastes may change, so try stronger flavours or sweet foods.
- Don't stop someone eating dessert if they haven't eaten their savoury meal. They may prefer the taste of the dessert.
- If food goes cold it will lose its appeal.
- Consider serving half portions to keep food warm. Use a plate warmer or a microwave to reheat food.
- If the person is having difficulties chewing or swallowing, try naturally soft food such as scrambled egg or stewed apple in the first instance, before considering pureed food.
- If you do consider pureed food, seek advice from a dietitian or speech therapist to make sure it's nutritious and has enough flavour.
- Encourage the person to get involved at mealtimes. They could help prepare the food or lay the table.
- Try to give the person encouragement and gentle reminders to eat, and of what the food is.
- A relaxed, friendly atmosphere with soft music may help.
- Use eating and drinking as an opportunity for activity and social stimulation. It may be an opportunity to talk about food from their childhood, and this can be used to encourage appetite.
- If the person refuses food, try again a bit later. If they continue to refuse food, speak to your GP.
- It is always best to aim for the least stressful solutions. Common sense and a creative approach often help.

To read the original transcript of this article and find more great tips to assist your loved-one with dementia, visit: <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk>

Need support ?

- **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
- **Local carers support group, the Byron Carers Coffee Club held on the 2nd Monday of every month.** telephone: 0412 911 613
- **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 social activities and attend 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.

Byron Shire Respite Service - Day Program Timetable

monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday
10am – 2:30pm centre-based day respite <i>dementia friendly</i>	10am – 3pm centre-based day respite <i>dementia friendly</i>	10am – 3pm centre-based day respite <i>dementia friendly</i> Bus outings Shopping & picnic days	10am – 3pm centre-based activities for older people	10am – 3pm centre-based day respite <i>dementia friendly</i>



Lunch, morning and afternoon tea is provided. The cost for the day including transport is \$22.00 (Fees subject to change).



For more information, please contact centre on 02) 6685 1921
Email: service@byronrespite.com.au

Therapies and communication approaches

Communicating effectively with a person who has dementia becomes an increasing challenge as the person progressively loses their memory and their ability to organise and express their thoughts. Research and experience have shown that music and dance therapies can support a person's wellbeing.

According to Dementia Australia, the loss of recent memory means that the past begins to merge with the present resulting in additional difficulties for family and carers. However activities that involve music are another effective way of communicating with a person who has dementia. Music can be used as a formal therapy or simply for enjoyment.

Cares may have noticed that often when other skills have gone, the person can still enjoy old familiar songs and tunes. A certain piece of music can unlock memories and feelings and it's important to be prepared to respond to the release of these feelings. The big advantage of music is that it does not require a long attention span and it can also be a valuable trigger for reminiscing. Knowing a person's musical likes and dislikes is vital for this to be a successful approach. In addition, Dementia Australia believe that ideally, activities such as music therapy for a person living with dementia should:

- Maintain residual skills
- Compensate for lost activities
- Promote self-esteem and empower the individual
- Keep the mind stimulated and encourage new learning
- Provide an opportunity for enjoyment, pleasure and social contact
- Be sensitive to the person's cultural background

In addition, the use of music with people with dementia can address complex behaviours. Activities such as singing and dancing play a significant part in calming or diverting a person when they are restless or distressed. People may be spectators or participants. The day program at Byron Shire Respite Service enjoys visiting musicians who have experience engaging people with dementia.

To learn more about therapies and communication approaches for people with dementia, visit: <https://www.dementia.org.au>

To learn more about music in our day program, telephone Nicole on 02) 6685 1619.

