



Family and Friends matter

Close family members and friends accept you as you are

They listen

They are there for you

They show you respect

You can share things with them that you might not share with others

They are invaluable links to the past and the future

Close friends and family help us navigate life's ups and downs. They accept us as we are. But what can we do to maintain this special bond when a family member or friend is living with dementia? How do we stay connected in ways that are meaningful, and what interests can we continue to enjoy together?

Family and friends play an important part in our lives. According to Dementia Australia, the need to be a valued member of a family or circle of friends does not diminish with dementia.

In fact, the chances are that this is when we need our family and friends most. Yet, often the fear of the unknown, or the changes that we see, interfere with our ability to continue with the relationship as we knew it. Changes will occur as a result of dementia, but important elements of the relationship still remain.

Communication is essential for maintaining our identity and connecting us to others. The content of our everyday exchanges may be relatively unimportant. What counts is their role in connecting us together. Remember, any simple activity can be a positive experience.

The art of spending time with a person living with dementia is not what is done – but doing it together.

Being involved in everyday activities helps everyone feel productive and able to contribute.

Visit: www.dementia.org.au for tips and ideas on staying connected to a loved-one living with dementia.



The Byron carer

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www.byronrespite.com.au

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.

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

Telephone Barbara Chambers on: 02) 6685 1619

or Colin Munro: 02) 6685 1921

Website: www.byronrespite.com.au

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.

EXTREME HOT WEATHER & DEMENTIA

For many of us, a heatwave means we have a good excuse to enjoy lazy days on the beach, barbecues and beer gardens. But for older people or people living with dementia, the warmer weather can cause discomfort, dehydration and distress.

People at risk of health complications due to the warmer weather include people:

- Over the age of 65 years
- Living with a cognitive impairment or dementia
- Living alone
- Taking medications that affect fluid balances and/or reduce sweating
- Taking medications that cause drowsiness

Dehydration can occur at anytime, but more common during hotter weather and can lead to increased confusion and delirium. Memory problems mean someone with dementia can easily forget to drink enough water. Additionally, the part of the brain that recognises you're dehydrated and sends a message to let you know you're thirsty doesn't always work properly.

How to recognise the symptoms of dehydration
According to Alzheimer's UK, there are some things that may show a person is dehydrated. If you spot any of the following, encourage the person to drink water immediately and seek medical help if you need. If the condition worsens or doesn't improve, go straight to the hospital.

- Increased confusion (compared to typical dementia symptoms)
- Dark and strong-smelling urine
- Dry mouth, lips and eyes
- Headaches or dizziness
- Feeling tired
- Not peeing very often (fewer than 4 times a day)

5 tips to help people with dementia stay comfortable in hot weather

1. Make sure the person is dressed appropriately

If someone with dementia is dressing themselves, they might follow their usual routine and forget to dress for the weather. Light-coloured, loose-fitting clothes made from natural fibres can help keep people comfortable and prevent overheating. Always wear a sun-hat or wide-rimmed cap outdoors.

2. Keep the house as cool as possible

Check that the central heating hasn't been switched on, and invest in some fans if necessary. Keeping the curtains or blinds closed during the day – especially in sun-facing rooms, will also help to keep things cool. In the evening, open the windows to let the warm air out and colder air in.

3. Avoid the midday sun

We're all advised to stay out of the sun during the hottest part of the day (between 11am and 3pm), and this is even more important for older people with dementia. When you're out and about, stay in the shade. Keep a bottle of sunscreen in your bag, and make sure it's reapplied regularly.

4. Find ways to cool off

If someone with dementia is hot and agitated, help them take a cool bath or shower. You could also place a wash cloth and some iced water nearby, so they can dab themselves when they need to. For some DIY air-conditioning, try putting a frozen bottle of water or ice pack next to a fan.

5. Ask friends and neighbours to pop in and check the person is ok

If you don't live near the person or are worried about someone, ask friends who live nearby to visit. They could stay and have a drink with the person and make sure they have everything they need.

To view the original transcript of this article, visit <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk>

Byron Shire Respite Service Inc. is supported by the Australian Government Department of Health. Visit www.health.gov.au for more information. Our service also acknowledges the funding provided by NSW Government Family & Community Services Ageing, Disability & Home Care. Visit www.adhc.nsw.gov.au for more information.

Byron Shire Respite Service Inc. Activity Timetable

monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday
10am – 2:30pm Changed Behaviours with Dementia	10am – 3pm Dementia Specific	10am – 3pm Changed Behaviours with Dementia	10am – 3pm Older people	10am – 3pm Dementia Specific

Lunch, morning and afternoon teas are provided and the cost for the day including transport is \$20.

EATING AND DRINKING

People with dementia often experience problems with eating and drinking. But there are 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. Here are some ideas that may help:

- Make food look and smell appealing. The aroma of cooking can stimulate someone's appetite.
- Look for opportunities to encourage the person to eat, eg: if the person with dementia awakes during the night, night-time snacks may be a good idea.
- Give the person food they like. Don't stop someone eating dessert if they haven't eaten their savoury meal. They may prefer the taste of the dessert.
- Small and regular portions often work best.
- Try different types of food or drinks, eg: milkshakes or smoothies. Food tastes may change, so try stronger flavours or sweet foods.
- If food goes cold it will lose its appeal. Consider serving half portions to keep food warm.
- If the person is having difficulties chewing or swallowing, try naturally soft food such as scrambled egg or stewed apple.
- Encourage the person to get involved at mealtimes. They could help prepare the food or lay the table.
- Try a relaxed, friendly atmosphere with soft music.
- If the person refuses food, try again a bit later. If they continue to refuse food, speak to the GP.
- Common sense and a creative approach often help. It is always best to aim for the least stressful solutions.

Need support?

- **My Aged Care** 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 052 222
(24hrs)

- **Call Colin or Barbara at Byron Shire Respite Service Inc. to discuss your role as a carer.** ph: (02) 6685 1921
- **National Dementia Helpline** ph: 1800 100 500
- **Carers Counselling Service** ph: (02) 6628 6416
- **Carers NSW** ph: 1800 242 636
- **Sandra Kimball Counselling** ph: 0458 175 962
- **Far North Coast Commonwealth Respite & Carelink Centre** ph: 1800 052 222
- **National Continence Helpline** ph: 1800 330 066
- **NSW Elder Abuse Helpline** ph: 1800 628 221

Aids:

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

Need Transport?

- **Tweed Byron Ballina Community Transport** ph: 1300 875 895

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.

Travel for medical appointments free with travel voucher or for Veteran and Widow Gold Card holders:

- **Byron Shire Limousines** ph: (02) 6685 5008
- **Brunswick Limousines** phone David on: 0412 855 747.

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

HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECKS

HELP FIRE & RESCUE NSW

HELP YOU BE

HOME FIRE SAFE

More than half of all home fires start in the kitchen. Each year Fire and Rescue NSW attends approximately 2,500 kitchen fires – which make up for approximately 56% of all residential fires.

If you are caring for someone with Dementia, a **HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECK** performed by your local fire station can assist with independent living for the person you care for, provide reassurance and increase safety. Firefighters can check for any hazards present in the home, provide fire safety advice and install 10 year smoke alarms.

If you are interested in this service and want to know more, call your local fire station directly and mention the **HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECK**. You may also telephone the Fire & Rescue NSW's *Community Engagement Unit* on: 1800 151 614 or email or: ceu@fire.nsw.gov.au

The main aim of the **HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECK** program is to:

1. Protect lives and property from fire
2. Minimise preventable fire deaths
3. Educate 'at risk' groups on fire prevention and preparation.

There are simple steps seniors, and everyone else, should take to improve fire safety in the home.

BE FIRE SAFE:

- Make sure smoke alarms are installed and working - test them monthly and change batteries annually.
- If you are unable to maintain your smoke alarms, contact your local fire station.
- Firefighters can assist older residents who live by themselves and need smoke alarms installed and batteries replaced.
- Have an escape plan in place, practice it and make sure your family/carer knows about it - it's particularly vital for people with reduced mobility to practice their escape plan.

Where possible, know two safe ways out of every room in your home.

- When at home, leave keys in OR near deadlocks so that you can quickly escape in an emergency.
- If you have difficulty hearing, then consider installing special smoke alarms which have a flashing strobe light and vibrating pad that can be placed under a pillow. These will activate when the smoke alarm sounds.
- Don't fight the fire - get out and stay out. Dial Triple Zero (000) immediately. Never assume that somebody else has done so.
- Close internal doors when leaving your home to reduce fire spread.
- Smoking in bed is dangerous. NEVER smoke in bed.
- Have an approved electrical safety switch (residual current device) installed.
- Don't overload power points. Switch off small appliances when not in use.

Smoke alarm assistance

- For assistance with the installation of smoke alarms and changing their batteries, older people can contact their local fire station.

Heating wheat bags in microwaves

According to Fire and Rescue NSW, heating of wheat bags has a fire risk. Never heat longer than manufacturer's instructions and never more than a maximum of 3 minutes.

Adding oils to wheat bags increases the fire risk.

Home made wheat bags have a higher risk. Continual heating and drying of wheat bags increases the risk.

Adding a cup of water in the microwave should decrease the risk.

For more information and fact sheets on risks around the house, visit the Community Fire Safety section at: <https://www.fire.nsw.gov.au>

Microwave Ovens & house fires

Microwave ovens are a fabulous invention.

They are very useful for busy people, older people living alone and a simple cooking alternative for the non-cooks amongst us. Unfortunately, cooking appliances and equipment, including microwave ovens, are involved in causing many house fires in kitchens, so keep in mind that they may not be suitable for use by all people.

Microwave ovens work by emitting radiation that will excite water molecules and if there is no moisture available, other less volatile molecules will absorb the radiation and start to heat. Therefore any material which has dried out can overheat and ignite in a microwave oven.

Also, any metal objects inside a microwave can cause severe sparking which could lead to a fire.



In an Emergency Call Triple Zero (000)