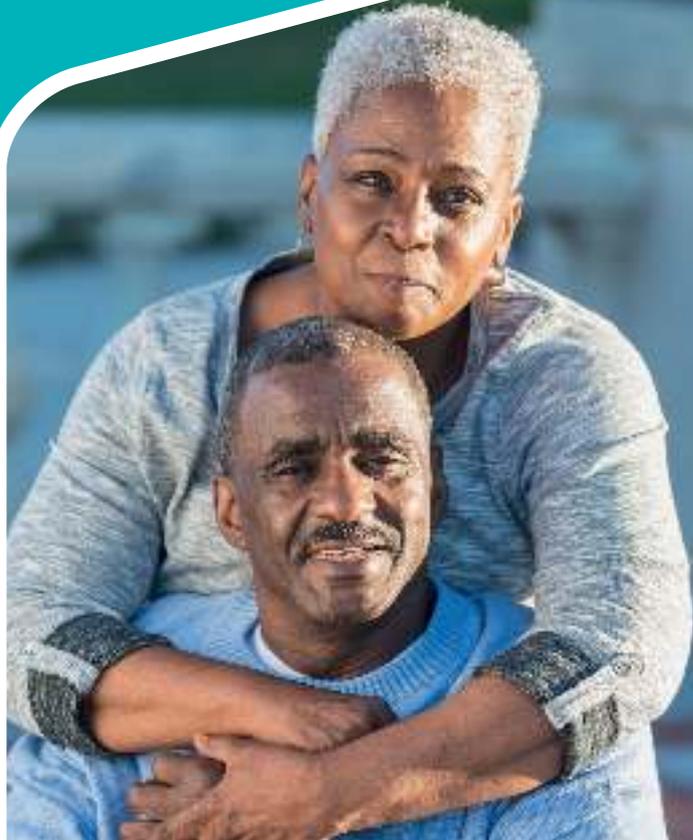




DementiaUK

Helping families face dementia

**Looking after yourself
when you care
for someone with
dementia, during the
coronavirus outbreak**



Looking after yourself

Looking after someone with dementia can be a 24-hour a day job, and one that may be both physically and mentally demanding.

It can be difficult to prioritise your own needs. However, it is vital to look after yourself and to keep both you and the person

with dementia as mentally and physically well as possible. If you are not well and do not have enough support or time to recharge your batteries, you will not be able to continue.

If you are self-isolating because of the coronavirus, you might spend more time with the person with dementia, at home, than normal.





How can you look after yourself?

Take care of your health and well-being

It can be useful to think of looking after yourself as a carer as a bit like giving first aid, or putting the oxygen mask on during a flight emergency: look after yourself first, so that you have the strength to look after those around you.

It is important not to neglect your own physical or mental health when caring for someone with dementia, even though it might seem as though you have no time for yourself. Niggling pain, or feelings of depression or that you cannot cope, might seem like the least of your worries, but these might build up over time into something more serious. If you

are ever worried that things are getting too much, you can call the dementia specialist Admiral Nurses on our Helpline, on 0800 888 6678, or helpline@dementiauk.org.

The Helpline is open seven days a week, from 9am-9pm Monday to Friday, and from 9am-5pm on weekends.

- Keep yourself physically active: make time to go for a walk, if you are able to do so while keeping a safe distance from others (two metres, or about three steps)
- follow yoga or aerobics videos on the internet. There are routines for all abilities and levels of fitness
- Keep your mind active: read books or the newspaper, do puzzles and crosswords



Any activity you can do together which creates a sense of connection can be worthwhile. Explore what the person living with dementia can still do.

Enjoy time with the person you care for

As dementia progresses, it can become more difficult to separate the person from the condition, and if you are the main carer, the care you give might start to take over completely from the relationship that you had with them before.

Because dementia is a progressive condition, it does mean that the person will change over time. It is normal for the people around them to feel a range of emotions, such as grief, anger and guilt, all of which can also influence your relationship.

But there are things you can do to remain connected to or reconnect with the person, so that your relationship, although different, still brings you both some enjoyment. You might need to be creative: if you both previously liked hiking, or taking holidays together, consider what it was about those activities that appealed to you. Can you recreate any of that enjoyment by going for walks or sitting outside in the garden?

Any other activity you can do together which creates a sense of connection can be worthwhile. Explore what the person living with dementia can still do, rather than what they cannot. You could try:

- Listening to music together
- Watching a favourite film or musical
- Going for a walk
- Looking at pictures of places you have travelled to
- Going through photos of you together

Looking after your other relationships

Staying in contact with your friends and family gives you the opportunity to talk to other people about what you are going through and also to get vital support in the caring role. You could:

- Schedule a phone call or video call, using Skype, Facetime or other equivalent, with a friend for a time you know the person with dementia will be asleep, or watching a favourite programme etc. Even a short call could help you recharge your batteries

- If possible, arrange a regular phone or video call with members of the wider family, so that the person with dementia can maintain their sense of connection

If you have any questions about looking after yourself when you're looking after someone with dementia, or anything else about the condition, call the Admiral Nurse Dementia Helpline on **0800 888 6678**.

Sources of Support

If you have any questions or worries about dementia, you can call the Admiral Nurse Dementia Helpline on **0800 888 6678** or email **helpline@dementiauk.org**. The Helpline is open 9am – 9pm Monday to Friday and 9am – 5pm at weekends.



The information in this booklet is written and reviewed by dementia specialist Admiral Nurses.

We are always looking to improve our resources, to provide the most relevant support for families living with dementia. If you have feedback about any of our leaflets, please email feedback@dementiauk.org

We receive no government funding and rely on voluntary donations, including gifts in Wills.

For more information on how to support Dementia UK, please visit www.dementiauk.org/donate or call **0300 365 5500**.

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If you're caring for someone with dementia or if you have any other concerns or questions, call or email our Admiral Nurses for specialist support and advice.



Call **0800 888 6678** or email helpline@dementiauk.org

Open Monday – Friday, 9am – 9pm
Saturday and Sunday, 9am – 5pm

www.dementiauk.org • info@dementiauk.org