



For carers, By carers

Going into hospital

Whether it's you or the person you are caring for who is going into hospital, the experience can be upsetting for you both. The situation may cause a person with dementia to become more confused and disorientated and this can result in a deterioration in their dementia. Either if it's a planned or emergency admission there are some things that you can do in advance, and during the hospital stay, that will make the experience less stressful.



What carers would like to share with you

- If it's you going into hospital, think, and arrange in advance, who would support the person you care for. It could be a relative, friend or short-term admission into a care home.
- If the person with dementia has to go into hospital ensure staff are aware of their specific needs and ways of reducing their stress. The 'Getting to Know Me' form, available from Alzheimer Scotland, is a good way of providing this information.
- Pack a bag in advance or make a list of items that the person you care for will need. Include a calendar, clock, glasses, hearing aids, list of medications and any activities that they enjoy doing. Check their hearing aids don't run out of battery power during their stay.
- Leave some items in their hospital room that will make it feel more familiar such as photographs and objects that are important to them.
- Look out for signs of delirium such as being much quieter than usual, or more agitated and/or hallucinating, and discuss this with staff.
- If you are concerned about any other aspects of their health also point these out - you know the person better than staff do and may spot signs earlier.
- If you want to help with personal care or eating/drinking do so.
- If the person you care for is having trouble accepting physiotherapy ask to be involved in the session and do the exercises with them - they may feel less anxious and more motivated.
- Some hospitals have facilities for you to stay overnight in the person's room if they are finding the situation particularly stressful.
- Try to be there when the doctor visits, or ask for a summary of the discussion, so that you are kept up to date and can explain things to the person you care for.
- If the person you care for is being moved, transferred or discharged they may be less anxious if you go with them. Ask if this can be arranged.

Did you know?

- Unpaid carers have a legal right to be involved in discharge discussions and, with the person's permission and/or as Power of Attorney for Welfare, can also be involved in care plan discussions.
- Some hospitals have a Carers Hub from which you can get useful information.
- Many nurses have advanced training in dementia.
- Alzheimer Scotland's National Dementia Advisor Service can provide information, advice and advocacy around navigating health care systems, including matters relating to hospital admission, visiting and discharge.

"Looking back, I wonder did I speak up enough – I tended to defer to the professionals. But the fact is I knew her better than they did, and the decisions that were made affected the rest of our lives."

Top Tips for Carers

- Put in place as soon as possible a Power of Attorney and Advance Statement that truly reflects the wishes of the person with dementia – it's key for future proofing.
- As a carer you have rights protected by legislation.
- If you provide regular care you are entitled to a Carer's Assessment which will enable Social Services to offer you advice and support.
- Don't become isolated. Engage with family, friends and neighbours. Explain the situation to help them understand your feelings.
- Keep handy a list of important phone numbers such as for the GP, Social Work and, of course, Alzheimer Scotland.
- Keep a diary of appointments where you record all the support and advice available, and any action taken.
- Technology and apps can help people with dementia to live well and safely and can provide peace of mind for carers.
- Remember that before you were a carer you were the person's family, friend, partner or neighbour – that will never change, even as your caring responsibilities increase.
- Your own health and wellbeing are VITAL. Try to make time for yourself. Continue with your hobbies and sports. Accept help.

Contact Alzheimer Scotland for more help and information

Further information

This is one of a series of 'For Carers, By Carers' leaflets:

- Going for a diagnosis
- Helping someone with dementia to live well
- Working with professionals and services
- Going into hospital
- Moving into a care home
- Looking after yourself
- When problems arise
- Grief and loss

Email activevoice@alzscot.org or

Visit www.alzscot.org/ndcan for copies.

Useful contacts

Alzheimer Scotland's
National Dementia
Advisor Service
0300 373 5774

Alzheimer Scotland's
24 hour Freephone
Dementia Helpline
0808 808 3000

www.alzscot.org



About NDCAN

We are a national, member led campaigning and awareness raising group of current and former dementia carers in Scotland. Formed in 2011, we exist to make the voices of dementia carers heard and to raise awareness of the issues impacting on carers. Find out more about NDCAN and how to join us at www.alzscot.org/ndcan

'For Carers, By Carers' were first created in 2016 by NDCAN members, with funding from The Life Changes Trust, to share their knowledge to help other carers. In 2024 members reviewed and updated them.

NDCAN would like to thank the previous members who helped produce the original leaflets – Bernard O'Hagan, Myra Lamont, Maggie Muir, Lorna Walker and Janette Kean, and the current members who reviewed them – Joanna Boddy, Maureen Huggins, Thea Laurie and Ian Tomney.