



For carers, By carers

Looking after yourself

When caring for someone, it's so easy to spend all your time caring for them that you don't think about yourself. It's important to maintain your own wellbeing and by doing this you will also enhance the positive care you provide to the person with dementia. Don't wait until you're in crisis before asking for help, prevent it from happening by reaching out early, and looking after yourself as well.



What carers would like to share with you

- Be kind to yourself and prioritise what is possible to do - remember you can only do so much.
- Look after your health by doing some sort of regular exercise, preferably outside, to keep your strength up.
- Sometimes you need a break from your caring role to recharge. Try to maintain hobbies and interests. Keep doing things that make you 'you'.
- Ask family and friends to look after the person you care for while you go out. You may also be able to access respite care for the person you look after.
- Be honest with yourself about what you can and cannot do. Give yourself more time to do things so that you're not always in a rush.
- Talk to other carers and past carers to share experiences and coping mechanisms. There may be carer groups in your area or try an online group.
- Continue to take an interest in what's going on in the lives of family and friends. This will help you feel connected and help them be more understanding if you're having a tough time.
- Keep your sense of humour, this will help you carry on if things get difficult.
- If you have a job talk to your employer about how it can be adapted to accommodate your caring role.
- Don't compare yourself to others. You are doing a wonderful job in a way only you can.

Did you know?

- Your local authority should assist you with respite from caring for someone with dementia:
 - Some care homes have places for temporary respite.
 - Self-Directed Support (SDS) may enable you to engage someone to be with the person you care for, which will allow you to have some time to yourself.
- Annual health checks, flu vaccination and counselling services are available to you if you are a carer.
- Post diagnostic support is for you as well as the person you care for.

"Try to keep in touch with the people you care about, and who care about you. This can be a great source of support if you're struggling."

*"You never know what other help is available till you ask.
Always worth a try!"*

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.

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