

Tips for Families of Persons Living with Dementia in Residential Care Communities

If you are a family member of a person living with dementia who resides in a nursing home or an assisted living community, you may be worried about their safety and well-being because of the coronavirus pandemic. While there are no simple answers, there are some questions to consider if you are faced with this situation.

Ask the home or community about their procedures for managing COVID-19 risk. Consider the following questions:

- 1. **Do staff have the personal protective equipment (PPE) — like masks, face shields, gowns, gloves — that they need to stay safe, and keep their residents safe? Individuals living with dementia often require hands-on assistance therefore, it is critical that staff have access to PPE in order to safely provide care.**
 - If not, what is the plan to obtain PPE?
 - Has the staff been given specific training on how to use PPE?
- 2. **Do they have plans to conduct ongoing testing of residents and staff to monitor the spread of COVID-19?**
- 3. **What are they doing to help residents stay connected with their families and friends during this time?**
 - Do they help residents call their family or friends by phone or video?
 - Will they set up a regular schedule for you to speak with your loved one?
 - Are they accepting and distributing mail to residents?
- 4. **How will important information be communicated to both residents and families (phone, email etc.) and how frequently?**
- 5. **How do they ensure that residents with dementia are getting proper nutrition?**
 - Are staff reminding residents to drink and eat as they may not be able to recognize hunger or thirst?
 - Are licensed or trained personnel assisting and monitoring all persons with dementia who have been identified as having a choking risk or a history of swallowing difficulties?
- 6. **Have staff been trained in strategies to observe and respond to dementia-related behaviors?**
 - How will they ensure that persons living with dementia get regular exercise and protocols are in place to prevent unsafe wandering?
- 7. **Can family members join care planning meetings remotely during COVID-19?**
- 8. **Are they aware of the resident's advance directives? How will they ensure the directives are up to date and follow the person if a transfer is necessary?**



RESOURCES

Find your state's Long-Term Care Ombudsman to voice concerns about care issues in a facility:
theconsumervoice.org/get_help

Find local caregiving resources at: aapr.org/crf or call 211 for more local resources

What if the nursing home or assisted living community has an incidence of COVID-19?

The answers to these questions can help you make the best decision for your family.

1. How many people tested positive for COVID-19? This includes residents, staff and outside vendors.
2. What are they doing to prevent infections?
- What are their quarantine procedures?
 - Are the [Centers for Disease Control and Protection \(CDC\)](#) and [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#) guidelines being followed?
 - How are staff being screened for COVID-19 and how often?
 - What precautions are in place for residents who are not in private rooms?
3. Is the community providing care to COVID-19 residents?
4. How many staff members interact with your family member on a regular basis? Are they able to limit the number of staff who provide care to him or her?
5. Are they at full staffing levels for nurses, aides and other workers?
- What is the plan to make sure the needs of residents are met — like bathing, meals, medication management, social engagement — if they encounter staff shortages?

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION RESOURCES

24/7 Helpline
(over 200 languages)
800.272.3900

Information and resources
alz.org

COVID-19 Help Center
alz.org/covid19help

ALZConnected®
alzconnected.org
Free online community

AARP'S CAREGIVING RESOURCES

AARP Nursing Homes Information
aarp.org/nursinghomes

AARP Coronavirus Information
aarp.org/coronavirus

AARP Caregiving COVID-19 Tip Sheets
aarp.org/employercaregiving

AARP Caregiving Resource Center & Family Caregiver Support Line
English: aarp.org/caregiving
or call 877-333-5885

Spanish: aarp.org/cuidar
or call 888-971-2013

The Alzheimer's Association is a worldwide voluntary health organization dedicated to Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to lead the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementia™.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that empowers people to choose how they live as they age.