

Men and caring

LOOKING AFTER FAMILIES & CARERS

This Help Sheet describes some of the issues that may affect men who are caring for a person with dementia.

Many men find themselves caring for someone with dementia. Most of these men are caring for their partners, although male carers can also include sons, brothers and friends.

Caring for someone with dementia can be very demanding. For many men it can present extra challenges.

Taking over household tasks

In many homes it is often the woman who takes the main responsibility for meal planning, cooking, cleaning, laundry and many of the other jobs that keep a household running. If the woman has dementia, she will gradually become unable to continue to do these tasks. The man in the caring role may need to begin assisting the person with dementia, perhaps by asking to be shown how to do these things. For some men, taking responsibility for these tasks may mean learning new skills or different ways of doing things.

Helping with personal skills

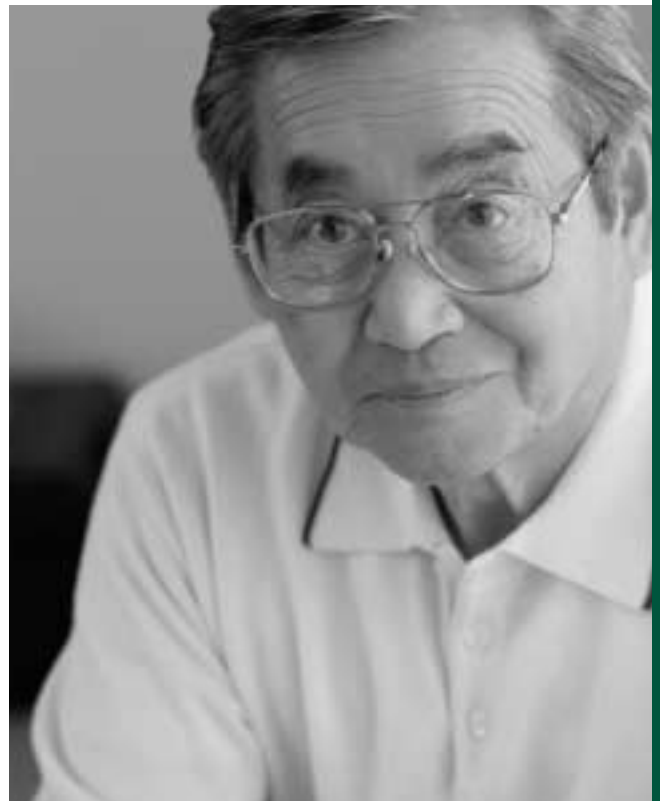
A male assisting a person with dementia may need to provide personal and intimate care, particularly as the illness progresses. Assistance may be needed with bathing and toileting. The person with dementia may also need help to apply makeup, put on pantyhose or arrange for hairdressing, all of which, for most men, are new experiences.

New challenges of everyday tasks

Some things that have been part of everyday life may become more complex. For instance buying a bra for a woman with dementia can present a challenge for many men. Helping to try on new clothes can be difficult when the person with dementia needs assistance in the ladies' change room.

Losing the emotional support of a partner

Generally, men do not have the extensive support systems that most women have. They often rely on their partners for emotional support and to maintain the friendships and family contacts that make up most of their support systems. As dementia progresses the ability of the woman to provide emotional support and maintain friendships and family contacts will be gradually lost. It is important that the man in the caring role is aware of these changes and takes action to ensure that they both have social and emotional support.



Men need support too

- It is important for all families and carers to take care of themselves. You may need to pay more attention to your diet and exercise
- It is essential to maintain social contacts
- Balancing your own needs with the day to day demands of caring can be difficult, but is important
- Arrange regular breaks from caring so that you don't get worn down. Contact support services to find out ways to arrange a break
- Some men find it helpful to talk with other men who are also caring for someone with dementia. Alzheimer's Australia can put you in touch with other men in a similar role
- Find a safe place to air emotional issues. Supportive family and friends, as well as support groups, help many men who are caring for someone with dementia
- Alzheimer's Australia can link people to a large number of support groups throughout Australia. Many people find comfort and practical assistance by attending these meetings with others who know what it is like to care for a person with dementia. Support groups bring together families, carers and friends of people with dementia under the guidance of a group facilitator. The facilitator is usually a health professional or someone with first hand experience of caring for a person with dementia

Who can help?

Commonwealth Carelink Centres around Australia provide information about the range of community care programs and services available to help people stay in their own homes.

Call **1800 052 222** or visit **www.commcarelink.health.gov.au**

Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres provide carers with information and advice about relevant services and entitlements. Contact your closest Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on **1800 242 636**.

Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres will assist you to find out about how to take a break from caring. Contact them on **1800 059 059**.

Another useful source of information is the Carers Association. The Australian Government has published a Carer Information Kit that provides information about the support and services that are available to carers and offers practical assistance. A copy of the Carer Information Kit is available by contacting the Carers Association in each State and Territory or visiting **www.carersaustralia.com.au**

The Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service (DBMAS) is a national telephone advisory service for families, carers and care workers who are concerned about the behaviours of people with dementia. The service provides confidential advice, assessment, intervention, education and specialised support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can be contacted on **1800 699 799**.

Further Information

Alzheimer's Australia offers support, information, education and counselling. Contact the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**.

For further information and to view other Help Sheets visit our web site at **www.alzheimers.org.au**