

Preparing for a move

This information is for you if you are caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias and you are preparing to move them to a long-term care home. From talking to families, we know that moving the person you care for to a long-term care home may be one of the most difficult decisions you will ever have to make. This information covers things to think about and hands-on tips to help you better prepare for the move.

The wait for a room in a long-term care home may be long, but the move is often sudden. If a room becomes available, it is common for the home to require an immediate commitment to take the room, often with a moving date within the next couple of days.

Many family members find that they do not have enough time to organize the logistics of the move, such as visiting the home before the move, filling out the required paperwork, packing belongings, arranging for movers and preparing the person with dementia for the move.

You can make the move easier for you as the caregiver and for the person with dementia by being prepared. To prepare for the move ahead of time, follow these tips:

Be open with family members; talk about the decision and the upcoming move. Changes that a move brings can be upsetting so many families may avoid talking about it. However, once you start a discussion, it gets easier. Family members who are less involved in caregiving or live out of town may not fully appreciate the need for a move. Consider asking them to help with some of the direct caregiving tasks, share information about the disease and encourage them to take part in the moving process.

Arrange for a visit to the home to help familiarize the person with dementia. It is important to make the person feel as comfortable as possible with the move that may come up suddenly. Depending on the stage of the disease and if appropriate, arrange for the person to visit the homes that you are considering for them. Many homes make their social activities available to the public; consider having the person attend a few functions to become familiar with each home. This can be time consuming so arrange visits to the homes that you think are the most likely options. Recognize that sometimes visiting each home is just not possible, especially if the move must be made quickly.



A note about the terms we use:

- "Family" and "Caregiver" refer to anyone involved in caring for or providing support to someone with dementia.
- "Dementia" refers to Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.
- "Long-term care home" and "home" refer to a "nursing home". The terms for nursing home vary across Canada; we use "long-term care home" or "home" for easier reading.

If you work, consider talking with your employer about the possibility that you may need some time off with very little notice.

Try to save a few vacation days in case the move comes up suddenly. Remember to have money saved to pay for the home's first month rent and any other services that the person with dementia may need (e.g. phone, cable television). Also, pre-arrange for a family member or friend to be available on standby to care for children or give a hand, if necessary.

Ask the home what you can do before moving day.

Ask the home about specific processes and procedures related to the move and see if you can do any of them ahead of time like doing paperwork before moving day. Also check whether you can prepare the room ahead of time by moving anything in or decorating.

Have as many familiar items in the new room as possible.

Take the time to sort through treasured items during this waiting time. Talk with the person with dementia and other family members when deciding what items to bring to the long-term care home, what items to store, and what items to give away. Familiar belongings may help the person feel more at ease and adjust to the new environment. Consider bringing the person's own bedding, photographs, radio, music or a favourite pillow. Some find comfort by holding body pillows or a familiar stuffed toy. These items can also help personalize the room. Sometimes it is helpful to give the staff a recording of your voice to play for the person.

Remember to bring essential items.

Essential items may include medications, clothing (labeled), toiletries and personal items such as incontinence products, emergency phone numbers, medical coverage cards, MedicAlert® Safety Home® bracelet, equipment or aids (e.g. hearing aids), and batteries.

Keep in mind that items can get lost in the home. Valuable items can get lost in the long-term care home so avoid bringing them (e.g. jewelry, medals, watches, etc.).

Make care decisions before the moving day.

On the moving day, staff need to know what your wishes are if the resident's condition worsens. Make sure to discuss the following care options with family members so that on moving day you can answer all of the home's questions about future care:

- Key contacts
- Power of attorney
- List of medications and previous health assessments (if available)
- Medical coverage and insurance benefits
- Medical treatments
- Advance care directives or living will

Source: Adapted from Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) webpage at www.healthcareathome.ca

See the next page for tips on how to address common concerns about preparing for a move.



Tips for preparing for a move

Common concerns about preparing for the move	Tips to help address your concerns
<p>I don't know what to expect.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visit or call the home and ask what you can expect on move-in day:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Can a staff member or volunteer give me and the person with dementia a tour of the home?- Which staff will be available on moving day to help the person with dementia while I am taking care of paperwork?- What should I pack for moving day and is there anything I shouldn't bring?- Do I need to bring a list of the medications that the person with dementia is taking?- Do I need to bring incontinence products for the person with dementia?- Do I need to label all of the person's belongings?- If some clothing doesn't need a label, what happens when it is laundered?- Whom should I ask for when we arrive?- Should I bring a void cheque for automatic payments?
<p>I'm working/ travelling/ have child care responsibilities and am not sure how I can be available on short notice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try to save a few vacation days for the time of the move.• Tell the homes (that have your name on the waiting list) how to contact you if you are travelling.• Arrange for a family member or friend to be available on standby to care for your child during moving day.• Contact local moving companies to learn about their process.
<p>I don't know what my role will be after the person moves into the home.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss with a social worker at the home about what they expect of family members regarding providing support for the person with dementia.

<p>I'm not sure how to feel like a member of the care team.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships with the staff and regularly communicate with the team. • Consider getting involved in the daily life of the home by joining the home's Family Council or volunteering to give tours for potential residents and their families. • Share your knowledge of the person with dementia and your experience of caring for them with the home's care team at the initial care planning meeting.
<p>I'm not sure what to do if I have questions or concerns about the care provided in the long-term care home after the move.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about your expectations and what is reasonable and work with staff to improve the person with dementia's experience. • Speak with the Social Worker or Director of Care about specific concerns. • Acknowledge that staff members are trying hard to provide the best possible care; treat them with respect and appreciate their efforts. For example, saying "thank you" goes a long way!

Alzheimer Society



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