

# **R→Imp** Dementia Care Guide

The following post outlines tips for caring for people with Dementia with tasks such as eating, communicating, Gait Training and Sundowning.

## Dementia Care Plan

### Eating

Dementia can greatly affect a person's eating habits and relationship to eating. People with dementia may struggle to recognise food and drink, which can result in it going uneaten. This can be due to damage that dementia causes to the brain, unfamiliar food, or how food is presented. Further, distractions such as television should be avoided at meal time and the person should be given ample time to eat as much as possible.

It is important to do what you can to ensure that the person you are caring for enjoys their food and eats a healthy, balanced diet. You can do this by placing food and drink in visible locations and presenting it in an attractive and easily identifiable manner.

Nutrition specialists can recommend special diets or, if the person is unable to eat or drink normally, they can carry out further assessments.

### Communicating

1. Ensure there is a positive mood – Your attitude and body language can say more than your words in certain situations.
2. Get the person's attention – Make sure there are no distractions when trying to communicate.
3. State your message clearly – Speak slowly and at a consistent volume.
4. Distract and redirect – If the person becomes upset try to change the subject or environment.
5. Reminisce – Remembering the past can be a soothing and affirming activity.

### Gait Training

As a person's dementia worsens they may find it increasingly difficult to discern space and distance which can result in falls and injuries. Gait training is helpful in improving depth perception in dementia patients and is similar to other forms of physical therapy.

# **R→Imp** Dementia Care Guide

This particular type of training helps improve balance, posture and muscle strength, thus, increasing mobility as well. Physical therapists may suggest different forms of exercise such as walking on a treadmill, lifting the legs or stepping over objects. There are many benefits of gait training and exercising for those with dementia, according to research from the [Alzheimer's Association](#), exercise:

1. Slows the decline in thinking skills (delays the shrinking of the brain)
2. Reduces stress
3. Can help improve symptoms of depression
4. Reduces the risk of falls

For a full gait training program, the [Gait Training Strategy report](#) published by the US National Library of Medicine provides a detailed outline of treadmill training and intensive mobility training.

## Sundowning

People with dementia may have [sleeping and behavioral problems](#) that begin in the afternoon and last into the night, referred to as 'sundowning' or '[late-day confusion](#)'. When a person is experiencing sundowning it is best to stay calm, find out if there is something the person needs, avoid arguing, assure them that they are all right, and, most importantly, do not try to physically restrain them.

[Tips for reducing](#) sundowning:

1. Keep the home well lit and ensure the person feels comfortable and safe
2. Maintain a schedule – for both meals and sleep
3. Plan active days, encourage exercise and avoid afternoon naps
4. Try to identify triggers by tracking their behaviour and minimise their stress

If these tips do not help reduce sundowning in a person, it is best to [contact your GP](#) who can check your loved one's medicines or prescribe them with something that will better help them relax and sleep.

# **R→Imp** Dementia Care Guide

The information on this site is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. All content, including text, graphics, images and information, contained on or available through this web site is for general information purposes only. Rapid makes no representation and assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of information contained on or available through this web site, and such information is subject to change without notice. You are encouraged to confirm any information obtained from or through this web site with other sources, and review all information regarding any medical condition or treatment with your medical professional.

**NEVER DISREGARD PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL ADVICE OR DELAY SEEKING MEDICAL TREATMENT BECAUSE OF SOMETHING YOU HAVE READ ON OR ACCESSED THROUGH THIS WEB SITE.**

Rapid does not recommend, endorse or make any representation about the efficacy, appropriateness or suitability of any specific tests, products, procedures, treatments, services, opinions, health care providers or other information that may be contained on or available through this web site.

**Rapid IS NOT RESPONSIBLE NOR LIABLE FOR ANY ADVICE, COURSE OF TREATMENT, DIAGNOSIS OR ANY OTHER INFORMATION, SERVICES OR PRODUCTS THAT YOU OBTAIN THROUGH THIS WEB SITE.**