

# Caregiver Assistance News

*"Caring for You - Caring for Others"*

**Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike,  
Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

**www.aaa7.org** **Helping You Age Better!**



**MARCH 2016**

## **Understanding Alzheimer's Disease**

### **How to Tell if a Person with Alzheimer's Disease is in Pain**

It can be difficult to figure out whether someone with dementia is in pain, and what is causing the pain. People with dementia may not be able to tell you in words that they are in pain, or even where the pain is. Sometimes, they can be in great pain, and not be able to communicate directly.



In the early stage of dementia, they may answer in what seems like a response to the question the doctor is asking - even though they do not understand the question - but simply trying to be helpful.

For example, wherever the doctor touches and asks, "Does it hurt here?" They may keep saying, "Yes." This does not help the doctor to figure out where the pain is.

You know the person in your care better than the doctor, so you will be able to interpret their way of communicating. Here are some signs of pain that will be of help when the person is unable to tell you directly:

- verbal cues - crying or moaning, calling out
- rubbing or protecting one part of the body
- facial expression, frowning or grimacing
- decreased activity level
- trouble sleeping
- a stiffened upper or lower body that is held rigidly and moved slowly
- increased agitation, aggressive behavior, pacing or rocking
- mental status changes, increased confusion or irritability

Each person has their own pain signature. You, as the caregiver, will know what behavior is typical. You can recognize that there is a change in behavior and perhaps when that change indicates pain.

# What to Do in an Emergency

In the course of caring for a person with Alzheimer's disease, it is likely that an accident will occur or that the person will appear to be seriously ill. A person with dementia can fall and break a bone and not complain of pain. On the other hand, a relatively minor illness or discomfort may make the person extremely upset. Because of their dementia, the person may not be able to help you to decide what kind of care is needed.



Is this an emergency? If it is, you should call 9-1-1, or whatever agency is in charge of sending the Emergency Medical Service in your area. You should not try to take the person to the emergency room on your own. How can you decide that there is an emergency? The following signs always indicate an emergency that needs immediate attention:

- loss of consciousness or a marked change in mental state
- sudden severe chest pain
- a fall that results in severe pain or the inability to move
- an accident that results in a blow to the head
- uncontrollable bleeding
- high fever accompanied by confusion and delusions
- difficulty breathing
- repeated or forceful vomiting
- failure to urinate for more than twelve hours
- sudden slurring of speech, loss of vision or balance, extreme weakness
- violent or uncontrollable behavior
- swallowing a poisonous substance

Even if none of these signs are present and you think that the person is seriously ill, call for emergency help. No caregiver looks forward to a visit to the emergency room, but it is a better alternative than neglecting a situation that could be life threatening.

## **NOTE**

If the person in your care is enrolled in a hospice program, find out in advance what arrangements the program has for emergency care.

## **Tip**

If the situation allows, ask that the person be taken to the hospital where their doctor is affiliated to facilitate continuity of care. Once you arrive in the emergency room, do your best to stay with the person in your care and to inform all staff members that they have Alzheimer's disease and that they may not be able to provide accurate information about their condition or to follow instructions.

# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

## Telling Family Stories

Remembering past events in one's life is something valuable and therapeutic for older adults and their families. By being able to relate their past, older adults become more cognizant, feel less depressed, and improve their behavior. Like a potion, it improves self-esteem and makes one have a more positive outlook for the future.



The process of writing past events can also pave the way to shake off some of the past, and seniors are able to think differently about their lives. Be it individually or in structured groups, life-writing encourages recollection of family relationships, career accomplishments, and major turning points in life.

## Community Wellness Classes

*brought to you by the Area Agency on Aging District 7*

**Chronic Disease Self-Management • Diabetes Self-Management  
A Matter of Balance Falls Prevention • Tools for Caregivers**

*Classes available throughout our ten-county district in 2016. Contact us to learn more about these FREE classes and when we will be in your area!*

**1-800-582-7277 or info@aaa7.org**



## Alzheimer's Support Events

### JACKSON/VINTON - Alzheimer's/Dementia Family Caregiver Support Group

**Third Thursday of Each Month** from 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm  
(Locations listed below will rotate)

Four Winds Nursing Facility, 215 Seth Avenue, Jackson, AND  
Jenkins Care Community, 142 Jenkins Memorial Road, Wellston  
Call Melissa Dever at 740-710-1821 for more information about location.

### SCIOTO COUNTY - Alzheimer's/Dementia Family Caregiver Support Group

**First Tuesday of Each Month** from 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm  
Southern Ohio Medical Center - East Campus  
2201 25th Street (Gibson Building - 1st Floor), Portsmouth

**Can't Attend in Person?? Teleconferencing Option Now Available!!** - During the meeting time, call (401) 283-4239 and enter PIN# 95249, or call Melissa Dever w/ the Alzheimer's Association ahead of time with your number to be called to join once the meeting starts. Ms. Dever can be reached at 740-710-1821.

## Don't Fall - Be Safe

*As we age, our feet can change shape and lose some feeling. This changes the way we walk and affects balance. Wear comfortable, firm-fitting flat shoes with a low broad heel and soles that grip.*





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## **Safety Tips - *Dehydration***

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A major cause of emergency room visits for frail or demented older adults is dehydration. Dehydration occurs when a person is either not getting enough liquids daily or excreting too much urine. The body's ability to detect thirst diminishes with age. Illness and medication can also cause:

- Headache - the most common symptom
- Dry mouth and tongue; cracked lips
- Dry skin
- Sunken eyes
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Dark, strong smelling urine
- Weight loss
- Fast heart beat; low blood pressure
- Confusion, light-headedness
- Disorientation

