

# 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 2015**

## Healthcare for the Person with Alzheimer’s Disease

Alzheimer’s disease (AD) may not make people feel physically ill, but it is sometimes a factor with individuals keeping healthy. That is why they must rely on their caregivers to help them eat a balanced diet, take their medications correctly, visit the doctor, and take care of all the details that are involved in staying in good physical and emotional health. Even at the very beginning of the illness, a person with Alzheimer’s will need help to manage the self-care that is needed to stay as fit as their age allows.



### Regular Check-Ups

People with Alzheimer’s disease are usually older adults, so it is not surprising that they may need glasses, hearing aids, or dentures, just like other older adults. It is important to be sure that all of these aids that help a person to interact with other people, and to enjoy the simple pleasures of eating, reading, and taking part in social activities, are in good condition and checked regularly. When a person with AD does not see or hear well, they may be even more confused and be left out of activities they still might be able to enjoy. In addition to AD, the person may also have other illnesses such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer, which also need to be treated. Even if the person with AD seems to be feeling well, it is important to have an examination by a physician. A condition the person with dementia was unable to tell you about may be found and treated before it becomes more serious.

Ensure—

- annual complete check-ups
- flu and pneumonia vaccinations
- screening for other medical conditions, as recommended by the doctor

It may be useful for the person to be seen by a geriatric psychiatrist in addition to medical doctors in order to have a complete picture of their physical and emotional health.

A person with Alzheimer’s may have difficulty cooperating with certain treatments because they may not understand why they are necessary. If the person is in the early stage, see if the treatment plan can be explained in a way the person will understand so that they can voice their opinions. Even if the person forgets what they said they would like or not like to have done, at least you will know. Ideally, the person has already completed the health care documents, called Advance Directives and Health Care Proxy, so that you will know how the person would like to be medically treated.

# Routine Healthcare

## Early-Stage Routine Healthcare

In the early stage of Alzheimer's disease (AD) you will:

- need to remind the person to take their medication at the right time
- re-order medications when necessary
- make their appointments with the doctor
- accompany the person with AD to the doctor
- bring lists of medications they are taking
- be prepared to give the doctor a medical health history
- describe their symptoms



## Middle-Stage Routine Healthcare

When the person advances to the middle stage of dementia, you will have more to do. They may be less able to cooperate with you, and may refuse to take necessary medications, eat regularly, or do other activities necessary to stay healthy. These behaviors are sometimes resistant to care. They are the challenging behaviors for which medications are often recommended, so the person may be less upset, angry, or difficult for the caregiver to manage; however, these medications can have serious side effects and are usually not as helpful as expected.

Some of the symptoms at this stage, such as hallucinations, delusions, and paranoia, are similar to those of people who have a mental illness. Although AD is not a mental illness, some of the same medications are prescribed. As mentioned above, while these drugs may be helpful, like all drugs, they must be used with caution in the lowest possible doses, and checked often to see if they are working. Ask the doctor what side effects to look out for. If problems occur, ask if the person should switch to another medication, or stop taking them.

## Late-Stage Routine Healthcare

In the late stage of Alzheimer's disease, you will have to speak for the person with dementia and tell medical providers what type of care the person had said they wanted when they were able to communicate their wishes.

## Alzheimer's/Dementia Lunch and Learn for Families

April 14th - Scioto County (Best Care Nursing and Rehab Center in Wheelersburg) 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm

May 21st - Jackson County (Jenkins Care Community in Wellston) 12 Noon - 1:30 pm

June 23rd - Highland County (Highland County Senior Center in Hillsboro) 11:30 am - 1:00 pm

**For more information or to register, call Melissa Dever with the Alzheimer's Association at (740) 710-1821**

## Don't Fall! Be Safe!

Use assistive devices or mobility aids when and how you should.

Tips or falls in wheelchairs account for many fall-related injuries for wheelchair users.



*"Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape."*

# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

## Why Laughter is Important for Good Health

Laughter is considered therapeutic medicine that gives many benefits including stress release, strengthened immune system, and improved sleep and pain reduction



In recent times, a worldwide phenomenon has risen. Clubs offer laughter yoga, which is a combination of yogic breathing and laughter, as a body mind approach to health and wellness. Laughing, tied to human physiology, is a natural cleansing process. You don't have to be genuinely happy to reap the physical and psychological benefits of laughter. Even in the saddest situations, it will enable the body to deal with emotional pain better because unexpressed emotions are released, rather than keeping it bottled up inside. Visit [www.laughteryoga.org](http://www.laughteryoga.org).

## Healing Power of Music for Individuals with Dementia

The Area Agency on Aging District 7 (AAA7) is proud to partner with Shawnee State University and Hill View Retirement Center in Portsmouth for a special showing of *Alive Inside*, an award-winning documentary that explores the healing power of music for people with dementia.



The documentary is by Michael Rossato-Bennett and explores the power that music can have to revitalize individuals through the experience of listening to music. The film follows Dan Cohen, the founder and executive director of Music & Memory<sup>SM</sup>, a program which uses custom playlists on digital music players to reconnect people with dementia to the world around them. The film won the 2014 Sundance Audience Award.

Music & Memory<sup>SM</sup> is an example of the type of person-centered innovation that Ohio is embracing, and its principles and practices hold tremendous potential for older Ohioans and their caregivers. Community involvement is crucial and volunteers can offer much help in terms of donating equipment and sharing their time enjoying music with nursing home residents.

The Ohio Department of Aging and the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman are helping nursing homes across the state become certified to offer Music & Memory<sup>SM</sup> to their residents. Locally, our AAA7 Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman program is the contact for this exciting venture.

**The local showing of *Alive Inside* will be held on Wednesday, April 8th from 5:00 pm until 7:00 pm at the Flohr Lecture Hall in Clark Memorial Library at Shawnee State University, located at 940 2nd Street in Portsmouth.**

Following the documentary, a panel discussion will take place. In addition, the Shawnee State University Occupational Therapy program will host an iPod drive in conjunction with the screening. Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend this special event to witness the healing power of music.

To learn more about Music & Memory<sup>SM</sup> in Ohio, log on to [www.aging.ohio.gov/services/music-memory](http://www.aging.ohio.gov/services/music-memory). Or, you can contact the AAA7 Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman Department at 1-800-582-7277 or [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org). For more information about the iPod drive, please contact Dr. Chris Raber at Shawnee State University at (740) 351-3530 or [craber@shawnee.edu](mailto:craber@shawnee.edu).



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

F32-URG, PO Box 500 • 160 Dorsey Drive • Rio Grande, OH 45674-0500

Toll-Free Number: (800) 582-7277 • TTY: 711 (Relay Ohio)

Website: [www.aaa7.org](http://www.aaa7.org) • E-Mail: [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org) • Facebook: [www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAgingDistrict7](https://www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAgingDistrict7)

## **Safety Tips - *Alzheimer's Safety***

Remember, a person with Alzheimer's disease may not be able to tell you they are sick, but may show you instead. Increased confusion, listlessness, changes in walking, being less attentive, and loss of interest in eating may signal a physical illness.

If the behavior of a person with Alzheimer's disease changes suddenly, or if a symptom appears that usually occurs much later in the illness, **THINK MEDICAL ILLNESS** and call the doctor. Alzheimer's disease progresses slowly and any sudden change in behavior probably happened because the person is sick.

Common causes of these sudden behavior changes are:

- infection, such as a urinary tract infection
- dehydration
- constipation or diarrhea
- a broken bone

Be sure shots for tetanus, flu, and pneumonia are up-to-date. For those on Medicare, flu and pneumonia shots are covered.

