

Hospitals

Older adults living with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias have three times more hospitalizations, four times more hospital stay days, and nearly three times more emergency department visits than other older adults. You can take practical steps to improve care for people living with dementia and create dementia friendly environments in your acute care setting.*



Interacting with People Living with Dementia

- Always introduce yourself before every interaction with the person, speak slowly and clearly, and maintain good eye contact.
- Give the person time to respond. Don’t interrupt or finish sentences.
- Engage the person in one-on-one conversation in a quiet space with minimal distractions. Ask a question that requires a “yes” or “no” answer.
- Be patient and supportive and avoid arguing.

Providing Continuity of Care¹

- Do hourly comfort and safety rounds and try to keep the patient’s staff consistent. Use a color-coded gown system to identify patients living with dementia.
- Get baseline behavior information from the patient’s family and caregivers and have a plan in place to recognize, assess and intervene if the patient were to become agitated.
- Provide Alzheimer’s disease information and a resource list to families.
- Continually assess medications and educate families on medication use. Encourage questions, especially regarding discharge.
- Effectively communicate and coordinate care with the family and post-discharge providers.
- Provide dementia education and training for all staff and volunteers. Find training resources at: <https://www.dfamerica.org/provider-tools>

Focusing on Person-Centered Care¹

- Consult the family about what the patient enjoys and what can agitate them.
- Develop standardized care plans for patients living with dementia that can easily be customized.
- Allow the patient to have a familiar item. Know their favorite foods and make snacks available.
- Ask the patient or family members for their preferred and address the patient by their preferred name.
- Ask families for feedback, such as “what can we do for you?” and “what can we do better?”
- Allow open visiting hours and have quiet rooms for caregivers to encourage self care and respite.
- Offer music, pet, and aroma therapy services.
- Train volunteer companions to work with patients living with dementia.

Adapting Physical Spaces

- Have a specific “dementia friendly” unit with specialized staff. Allow patients living with dementia to have a private room when possible.
- For ambulatory patients, have a common dining room for eating with a companion.
- Reduce noise in/around the patient’s room.
- Hang a calendar and refer to it.
- Provide safe room arrangements to prevent falls and wandering. Label each room with recognizable symbols, such as a toilet to identify the bathroom.
- Designate a room near a nurse’s station where patients and their family can gather.

References

1. **Provider Practice Tools- Managing Dementia Across the Continuum:** <https://www.dfamerica.org/provider-tools>
2. **Dementia Friends Pennsylvania:** <https://www.dementiafriendspa.org/>
3. **CARES® Dementia-Friendly Hospitals™ Online Training and Certification Program:** <https://www.hcinteractive.com/hospitals>
4. **MICROLEARNING FOR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS:** <https://alzpossible.org/training/>

Hospitals are just one important part of the community. Working alongside other sectors, health care professionals can help the whole community become more dementia friendly. Learn more about the process and help your community and others become more dementia friendly at [dfamerica.org](https://www.dfamerica.org).



Adapted from ACT on Alzheimer's® developed tools and resources.