

Caregiving in
The Comfort of Home®

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Emergencies—Is the Person with Alzheimer’s 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. They can be in great pain and not be able to communicate it directly.

In the early stage of dementia, she may answer in what seems like a response to the question the doctor is asking, even though she does not understand the question, but is simply trying to be helpful. For example, *wherever* the doctor touches and asks, “Does it hurt here?” She may keep saying, “Yes.” This does not help the doctor to figure out exactly where the pain is.

You know the person in your care better than the doctor, so you will be able to interpret her way of communicating. Signs of pain when the person is unable to tell you directly—

- ➔ verbal cues - moaning or calling out
- ➔ rubbing or protecting one area
- ➔ 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 his or her own pain signature. Because you know this



person, you 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 his 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 911, the fire department 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. The following signs always indicate an emergency that needs immediate attention—

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- loss of consciousness or a marked change in mental state
- sudden severe chest pain
- a fall that results in severe pain or 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.

NOTE

If the situation allows, ask that the person be taken to the hospital with which his doctor is affiliated to facilitate continuity of care.

Once you arrive in the emergency room do your best to stay with the person and inform all staff that he has Alzheimer's disease and may not be able to provide accurate information about his condition or to follow their instructions.

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

Have ready in advance:

- Insurance documents, advance directives, and a written profile of the person if you have one.
- A list of all of the medications the person is taking.
- A small notebook and a pen for questions and taking notes.

While waiting for the ambulance:

- Gather your wallet, identification, credit card, and cash for food, reading material.
- If the person with AD is not dressed, bring along a pair of shoes, clothes, and a coat to be worn home if he or she is not admitted to the hospital. Do not bring valuables, such as expensive watches, or jewelry; and do not leave more than a few dollars with him.
- Let family or a friend know that you are taking him to the hospital and could use a helping hand.
- If time permits, call the person's doctor to let her know that you are taking the person in your care to the E.R.

Source: *The Comfort of Home for Alzheimer's Disease: A Guide for Caregivers*



The Area Agency on Aging sponsors services to support non-paid caregivers of frail older adults who need services to maintain independent living.

If you are a caregiver and need help, contact the **Johnson County Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) Information Specialist** at **913-715-8861**.

The AAA works with community-based organizations to provide services for caregivers. These services are funded under the Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP). There is no fee to the caregiver for these services but donations are appreciated.

FCSP Services may include:

- **Respite Care**
- **Supplemental Services** – These services, attendant/person care, bathroom items, chore, homemaker, flex, repair/maintenance/renovation, transportation, are provided on a limited basis to complement the care provided by the caregivers.
- **Services may also be available for Grandparents or Relative Caregivers.**

HELPFUL WEBSITES:

Johnson County Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)
<http://www.jocogov.org/dept/human-services/area-agency-aging>

Aging & Accessibility Directory
[AAA publications and directories
http://www.jocogov.org/dept/human-services/publications-and-directories/aging-and-accessibility-directory](http://www.jocogov.org/dept/human-services/publications-and-directories/aging-and-accessibility-directory)

AAA Caregiver Support
<http://www.jocogov.org/dept/human-services/area-agency-aging/caregiver-support>

Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS)
www.kdads.ks.gov

Kansas Caregiver Guide
www.kdads.ks.gov/Publications/caregivers/Caregiver_Guide_2009.pdf

Family Caregiver Alliance
www.caregiver.org

National Institute on Aging
www.nia.nih.gov

Hospice Caregiver Information
www.hospicenet.org/html/caregivers.html

Hospice Foundation of America
www.hospicefoundation.org/caregivers

National Cancer Institute
www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/caring-for-the-caregiver

Taking Care of Yourself — How To Manage Frustration

It's a fact of life: the people closest to us are the same ones who best know how to "push our buttons." Feeling frustrated or resentful toward the people you live with, work with, or care for is a stressful and unhealthy situation, both for you and for others. Instead of letting negative feelings "simmer" or, worse, giving in to angry or unkind words and actions, take a time out to be grateful for the very people who can drive you nuts. The people in our lives are there because we value and appreciate them. Every time you're tempted to wish them out of your life, imagine losing all the good they bring into your life as well as the "bad." Let a feeling of gratitude fill you and frustration evaporates.

Source: *Happiness in this World*; www.happinessinthisworld.com



Inspiration

Resenting someone is a way of never leaving them.

Live Life Laughing!

Running late is exercise, right?



Memory Care

- Alzheimer's disease is the 6th leading cause of death in the U.S.
- More than 16 million Americans provide unpaid care for people with Alzheimer's or other dementias.
- 1 in 3 seniors dies with Alzheimer's or other dementia. It kills more than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined.

Source: *Alzheimer's Association*

Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

Q U I C K Q U I Z

Throughout the course of the person’s hospital stay, pay attention to your own level of stress and fatigue. If you don’t get enough help from family and friends you may need to hire a professional aide. This can be done through the hospital. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. The primary caregiver may know the person in care better than the doctor. As the caregiver, you will be able to interpret her way of communicating.
T F
2. Because of his dementia, a relatively minor illness or discomfort may make the person extremely upset.
T F
3. Loss of consciousness or a marked change in mental state is *not* a medical emergency.
T F
4. A major cause of emergency room visits for frail or demented older adults is *dehydration*.
T F
5. In the early stage, a person with dementia may respond to the doctor with a “yes” when asked about pain, even though she does not understand the question but is simply trying to be helpful.
T F
6. A person with dementia can fall and break a bone, and not complain of pain.
T F
7. The body’s ability to detect thirst does *not* diminish with age.
T F
8. People with dementia may not be able to tell you in words that they are in pain, or even *where* the pain is.
T F
9. A fall that results in severe pain or inability to move and an accident that results in a blow to the head are medical emergencies.
T F
10. One in three seniors dies with Alzheimer's or other dementia and it kills more than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined.
T F

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

This publication is made possible through the support of the Johnson County Area Agency on Aging using Older Americans Act III-E Family Caregiver Support Funds. For more information, call (913) 715-8860.

The Aging Network

As a result of 1973 amendments to the 1965 Older Americans Act, federal funding is provided for a network of agencies to coordinate services for the growing population of older Americans. This network includes the federal

Administration for Community Living (ACL), state administrative units on aging, more than 655 nationwide Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), and thousands of community-based senior centers and nutrition sites.

The Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) is the state administrative unit that oversees the operation of 11 state AAAs. Although most AAAs are private, not-for-profit agencies operating in multiple counties, the Johnson County AAA is a public not-for-profit operating as a unit of Johnson County Human Services.

For detailed information, visit www.jocogov.org/hsd.

Aging and Disability Resource Center

The Area Agency on Aging hosts your local Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), where people can turn for information, assistance, and a single point of entry to public long-term support programs and benefits. ADRCs provide unbiased, reliable information and options assistance to persons eligible for Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) for Frail Elderly, Physical Disabilities and Traumatic Brain Injuries, as well as assessment services for persons considering a move to a nursing facility.



Receive services or be of service. Both are easy!

Begin receiving aging services. To learn more about any of the services provided through the Johnson County AAA, call an aging information specialist at 913-715-8861.

Become a volunteer. Consider joining the network of dedicated volunteers who help senior adults live in the Johnson County community with independence, dignity, and hope. Volunteers may choose activities that meet their interests and time schedules. The AAA's priority volunteer program is Meals on Wheels. Call the coordinator of Volunteer Services at 913-715-8859 to learn more or to become a volunteer.

AAA Programs

- **Aging Information and Assistance.** Aging information specialists provide timely, updated facts about aging issues and services over the phone, through email, or in person by appointment.
- **Publications about Aging.** A variety of print and electronic materials provide important information of interest to senior adults and family caregivers.
- ***The Best Times***, a quarterly newsmagazine, is available to Johnson County residents 60 and older. The Best Times provides vital information about aging services, programs, organizations, activities, and issues. The publication is also available online. Contact 913-715-8930 concerning subscriptions.

Area Agency on Aging

11811 South Sunset Drive, Suite 1300,
Olathe, KS 66061-7056

913-715-8860 phone 913-715-2285 Fax
www.jocogov.org/hsd

AAA Programs

- **Caregiver Support.** Services to support non-paid caregivers of frail older adults who need services to maintain independent living.
- **Homemaker/chore programs.** Ongoing assistance with the upkeep and cleanliness of the home, shopping, and occasional heavy-duty cleaning are available through these programs.
- **Medication management.** Nurses visit private homes regularly to setup medications and monitor their use.
- **Assessment.** An in-home meeting with a potential client to determine needs for services. Additional assistance may be provided to coordinate multiple services if needed.
- **Nutrition Services.** Adults 60 and older in Johnson County have three dining options, based on their needs and preferences. Each meal provides a minimum of one-third of the daily nutritional requirements.

CHAMPSS: A senior dining option to augment meals at Senior Nutrition Centers, CHAMPSS provides greater time flexibility and more extensive menu selections at local grocery stores. Call 913-715-8894 for information regarding enrollment.

Meals on Wheels: Volunteers deliver nutritious meals Monday through Friday to senior adults who are homebound.

Senior Nutrition Centers: Nutritious meals are served at 11:30 a.m. five days a week at six centers. The centers offer friendship, education, fitness, and opportunities for socializing.

De Soto

32905 W. 84th St. 913-585-1762

Gardner

128 E. Park St. 913-856-3471

Lenexa

13425 Walnut St. 913-888-6141

Merriam/Shawnee

5701 Merriam Drive 913-677-2048

Overland Park

8101 Marty St. 913-648-2949

Roeland Park

4850 Rosewood Drive 913-826-3139

Spring Hill

401 N. Madison St. 913-592-3180

- **Legal services.** Seniors receive access to legal consultation and representation, education, and assistance with access to government benefits.
- **Personal care.** Attendants help senior adults with bathing, grooming, and other personal care.
- **Respite care.** An in-home substitute caregiver or adult day care can provide temporary relief for non-paid caregivers.
- A **private pay care management service** is offered through the ADRC. This service assists those who need help in setting up services for seniors in Johnson County.



For information on
programs call
913-715-8861

Johnson County
Area Agency on Aging
11811 S. Sunset Dr., Suite 1300
Olathe, KS 66061-7056

Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

Ordering Info

From the publishers of

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Caregiver Series

available from...

CareTrust Publications LLC
PO Box 10283, Portland, OR 97296
800-565-1533
or www.comfortofhome.com

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SAFETY TIPS—Dehydration

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 dehydration.

Signs and symptoms of dehydration include:

- Headache—the most common symptom
- Dry mouth and tongue
- Cracked lips and dry skin
- Sunken eyes
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Dark, strong smelling urine
- Weight loss
- Fast heart beat
- Low blood pressure
- Confusion, light-headedness and disorientation

NEXT ISSUE... ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING - PERSONAL HYGIENE