

Many people with Alzheimer's still enjoy visitors

#1 No matter how well you know the Alzheimer's patient today you are probably still a visitor they do not remember!

Even if your senior has Alzheimer's or dementia, they may still enjoy having visitors. Here's how to make these visits successful and positive by helping family and friends know what to say and do.

Plan visits strategically

Limit visitors to 1 or 2 people at a time. Too many people can be overwhelming.

Schedule visits for the time of day when your older adult is usually at their best.

Minimize distractions by keeping the environment calm and quiet. Turn off the TV or loud music and ask any non-visitors to go to another room.

Send this list to your visitors ahead of time so they'll have time to absorb the information or if there was not time – give this to them to read when they arrive. It helps make everyone more comfortable.

Do's and don'ts for visitors

DO

Keep your tone and body language friendly and positive.
Don't speak too loudly.

Make eye contact and stay at their eye level.

Introduce yourself even if you're sure they must know you. "Hi Grandma, I'm Joe, your grandson."

Speak slowly and in short sentences with only one idea per sentence. For example: "Hi Mary. I'm Jane, your friend." or "What a beautiful day. The sunshine is nice, isn't it?" or "Tell me about your daughter."

Give them extra time to speak or answer questions, don't rush the conversation.

Use open-ended questions because there are no right or wrong answers.

Be ok with sitting together in silence. They may enjoy that just as much as talking.

Follow their lead, don't force conversation topics or activities.

Validate their feelings. Allow them to express sadness, fear, or anger.

Enter their reality. Go with the flow of the conversation even if they talk about things that aren't true or don't make sense.

Share and discuss memories of the past. They're more likely to remember things from long ago.

Come prepared with an activity, like something to read out loud, a photo album to look at, or some of their favourite music to listen to.

Give hugs, gentle touches, or massage arms or shoulders if the person gives permission and enjoys it.

DON'T

Say “do you remember?” This can cause anger or embarrassment.

Argue. If they say something that’s not correct, just let it go.

Point out mistakes. It just makes them feel bad and doesn’t help the conversation.

Assume they don’t remember anything. Many people have moments of clarity.

Take mean or nasty things they say personally. The disease may twist their words or make them react badly out of confusion, fear, or anger.

Talk down to them. They aren’t children and you should show the proper respect.

Talk about them with other people as if they’re not there.

Bottom Line

It takes skill to interact with a person with Alzheimer’s and dementia. You’ve had a lot more practice than someone who only visits occasionally.

Give your older adult the gift of a lovely visit by setting your visitor up for success.

Before their visit, give them these do’s and don’ts.

Having a great visit and understanding more about dementia might even encourage family and friends to visit more often.