



Residential Care and Dementia - 04

Good Care in a Residential Facility

This Help Sheet lists some of the important aspects of good care for people with dementia who are living in residential facilities, including the involvement of relatives and friends.

Good care is based on how well a residential facility responds to each resident's needs. Some aspects of good care will vary between individuals according to their needs and preferences. You may have to weigh up many issues and prioritize what is important to you in the care of the person with dementia.

The following is a list of important aspects of good care. You might find that in the facility you visit there is a need for improvement in some areas. If this is the case you should first discuss your concerns with management. If you still have concerns you may wish to seek advice from the Long-Term Care Ombudsman in your state. For the Sheridan area in Wyoming please contact Tera Gillett at 307-235-5959 or 877-634-1006 email: tera.gillett@wyo.gov.

Important aspects of good care

This list of aspects of good care is by no means exhaustive. You can probably think of other aspects that may be even more important to you. For some people flexibility about meals, unrestricted visiting hours, or privacy and space for the resident and visitors to have time together are also essential aspects of good care. This list is not in any order of priority. All of these aspects are important.

1. An effective approach to care

Effective dementia care requires strong leadership and support by managers as well as by direct care staff. It also requires more staff to care for residents than general residential care and a focus on resident centered care. Resident centered care provides individualized care for the resident to ensure their physical, social, cultural and mental wellbeing.

Staff need training and skills in dementia care and management of special needs to provide good care. Staff should be encouraged to adopt and implement a resident centered approach to care. This provides the individual resident with support at a level required to maintain their well-being. In providing the necessary support for an individual, the service encourages the resident to maintain their independence, preferences and chosen lifestyle as much as possible.

Experience has shown that some separate areas are beneficial for the good care of people with dementia who have special needs. These needs may arise from behavior such as restlessness or wandering which are common in people with dementia. If a dementia specific unit is not possible, then an area such as a wing, or even a room, could be utilized to provide separation and safety.

Other ways of caring for people with dementia who may be agitated or restless are:

- Good dementia design including safe wandering areas.
- Individualized activity programs.
- A quiet area away from the TV.
- A massage with calming oil.
- The presence of pets may have a significant calming effect.

At times, it may be necessary to get advice from a psycho geriatrician, who might suggest a medication review, or in extreme cases, assessment in a special unit.



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Any special care needs should be addressed in the care plan. You should be asked for your input in developing strategies and actions that may be required to manage specific behaviors.

2. **Involvement of relatives and friends**

Good dementia care must involve relatives and friends as much as possible. This includes consulting and actively involving them in care planning and review. They should be treated as partners in caring, not just as someone who can help at meal times. Family and friends should be encouraged to be involved in residents' meetings and committees and to join any support groups.

3. **Effective pain management**

Often when people with dementia are in pain they are unable to tell anyone. The only way that we know that they are in pain is through changes in their behavior, such as restlessness, irritability or aggression. It is important to be sure that pain is not the underlying cause of any change in behavior.

Good pain management lowers the occurrence of confusion and distress and reduces the need for psychotropic medications (medications which relax and sedate people). Staff should have the clinical skills in pain assessment and management and should acknowledge and utilize the experience of families and care partners in this area. The goal of good pain management is to ensure that the resident is pain free. This can also mean looking at alternative approaches to pain control such as massage, acupuncture etc.

4. **Using minimal restraint**

Best practice nursing care means that physical and chemical restraint is rarely necessary except in extreme circumstances.

Physical devices such as vests, straps, wrist ties, splints, casts, mitts, restraining belts, bed rails, wheelchair bars and brakes, binders and bed sheets are some mechanisms that are sometimes used as restraints. Other approaches such as isolating the person in a locked or separate room can also be considered as restraint.

Chemical restraints include tranquilizers and sedatives when used outside their therapeutic role.

The facility must have a policy on this and should make it available to you. Ask for a copy if you haven't seen one.

5. **Specialist supports**

Access to specialist psychogeriatric assessment and advice in the management of dementia is important in providing good care for people with dementia. The advice of other allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, dieticians or psychologists may also be very useful in attaining the best quality of life for the person with dementia. Remember The key to good care is ensuring that the environment is as home-like as possible and centered on a flexible approach to providing the best possible support for the person with dementia.

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FURTHER INFORMATION: locally call Dementia Friendly Wyoming 307-461-7134 or visit our website <http://www.dwfsheridan.org> or The Sheridan Senior Center 307-672-2240. Nationally contact the Alzheimer's Association at 1-800-272-3900, or visit their website at <http://www.alz.org>.