

Handling moving day

This information is for you if you are caring for someone living with dementia and you are moving them to a long-term care home. From talking to families, we know that moving the person you care for to a long-term care home may be one of the most difficult decisions you could ever have to make. This information provides you with tips to make the moving day as successful as possible.

To make the moving day as successful as possible, follow these tips:

Explain the move simply and gently to the person with dementia. Speak directly to the person by saying, for example, “We are going to a place you can stay, a place where they will call me if you need me” or “I’ve found a place where you will be comfortable, cared for, have everything you need and where I can visit you often.”

Emphasize the positive aspects such as socializing and enjoyable activities.

The person’s reaction to moving may range from anxiety and fear to withdrawal. When you and the person arrive at the home, ask a staff member to show you and the person living with dementia around the person’s new space and the common areas of the home. Take time to help the person living with dementia get comfortable in their new space. Help unpack and arrange personal items such as photos. To comfort the person, say and do what you feel is best for them.



A note about the terms we use:

- “Caregiver” refers to anyone involved in caring for or providing support to someone with dementia.
- “Dementia” refers to all kinds of dementia—including the most common kind, Alzheimer’s disease.
- “Long-term care home” and “home” refer to a “nursing home”. The terms for nursing home vary across Canada; we use “long-term care home” or “home” for easier reading.

Be sure to take care of yourself on moving day as well. Ask a family member or friend to go with you for support or plan to have someone at home when you return so you are not alone.

Take time to prepare paperwork ahead of time. Ask if you can reserve the space by paying for it before the actual moving day. Allow plenty of time for paperwork and ideally, to help decrease stress, see if you can do it before the moving day. Ask a staff member to accompany the person living with dementia while you complete the necessary paperwork.

Note that you may experience many different emotions. Recognize that you are dealing with a stressful situation and that all emotions are normal. There is no right way to feel about the move. Some caregivers feel anger, grief, embarrassment, loss of control or relief. Speak with someone you feel comfortable with to help you process your range of emotions. Know that you have made this difficult decision for the safety and well-being of the person you care for.

Discuss with staff how you will leave the home after the move. The person living with dementia may get upset when you leave. It can be helpful to think of a distraction to ease the process. Ask about recreational activities that the person can participate in.

People living with dementia need support throughout the transition to a long-term care home from everyone in their support network, like family and friends.

Get the staff contact information. For peace of mind, after the move when you get home, consider checking with your staff contact to see how things are going.

“Most homes don’t allow residents to bring their valuable jewelry. But my mother loved wearing her necklaces and jewelry so I bought her cheap costume jewelry. It doesn’t matter if we lose them.” – Caregiver



What to bring on moving day checklist

Item	Action	✓
Furniture	Ask the home if you can bring personal furniture	
<i>All about me</i>	Fill out and print a copy of <i>All about me</i> to share with the staff. Available at: alzheimer.ca/allaboutme	
Clothing	Check if the home can label the person's clothing. If not make a list of clothing to bring and label clothing.	
Accessories	If space is limited, consider bringing clothing appropriate for the current season (hat, gloves, boots, umbrella, etc.)	
Personal grooming	Bring all personal grooming and toiletries items (toothbrush, comb, makeup, etc.)	
Assistive devices	Bring assistive devices and batteries <ul style="list-style-type: none">• hearing aids• glasses• dentures• walker• cane• braces• orthotics Mark or label the items. Adding a dot of nail polish can help to identify small objects.	
Legal and financial documents	Bring copies of all of the completed legal and financial documents <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Power of attorney• Medical coverage If required, share information about insurance benefits	
Calendar of upcoming events	Make a calendar of upcoming events and medical appointments and update it regularly	
Medical file	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask your pharmacist for a current list of medications• Bring medications in original containers• Bring the most recent health assessments	
Advance care plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bring a copy of the person's advance care plan (including wishes for medical interventions, Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) instructions or other advance care directives)• Living will	
Key contacts	Print a list of key contacts (organized by priority) in case of an emergency	
Valuables	Do not bring any valuables (jewelry, etc.). These should be kept with family or in a safe place outside of the home.	
Other	Ask the home if you can bring special equipment, such as radio, TV, telephone, cellphone, tablet, etc.	

Moving day can be extremely tiring and bring a sense of loss. Contact a friend or family member if you feel you need support. The Alzheimer Society is here to help you transition through this difficult time. Contact your local Alzheimer Society for support. Visit alzheimer.ca/helpnearyou.

Additional resources

Alzheimer Society of Canada. All about me. alzheimer.ca/allaboutme

Alzheimer Society of Canada. Long-term care series. alzheimer.ca/longtermcare

This resource is informed by research and the experiences of people living with dementia and their caregivers. We thank Catherine Hofstetter, caregiver, for her review of this resource. To provide feedback on this factsheet, please email publications@alzheimer.ca.

Alzheimer Society

Alzheimer Society of Canada

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