

Understanding Respite Care:

A Guide for Dementia Caregivers

CENTER FOR
**DEMENTIA RESPITE
INNOVATION**
ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION



Everyone needs a break. If you are a caregiver, you may need a break from caregiving tasks. If you have dementia, you may want a break from your daily routine and the opportunity to meet others who share some of the same challenges. Respite care can help by providing a new environment or time to relax. It can be for a few hours or several days or weeks depending on your particular needs and interests.

WHAT IS RESPITE CARE?

Respite care offers people living with Alzheimer's or dementia a safe and supportive environment, while giving caregivers a temporary break to tend to their own needs. Engaging with respite services not only provides essential relief but also helps strengthen your ability to continue providing care.

Respite care can be provided in various ways:

- In a home, community organization or residential care setting.
- For part of the day, evening or overnight.
- By paid staff, volunteers, family or friends.
- Occasionally or on a regular basis.

Respite care benefits both the person living with Alzheimer's or dementia and their care partner by providing relief, support and opportunities for socialization. Taking care of yourself is just as important as caring for the person living with dementia. Respite care helps you focus on your well-being while ensuring the person living with dementia is safe and supported.



TYPES OF RESPITE CARE

In-home care services offer a range of supportive options designed to keep individuals comfortable and engaged at home.

- Companionship services that provide engaging, supervised activities for the individual.
- Personal care or home care aide services to provide assistance with bathing, dressing, toileting and exercising.
- Homemaker or maid services to help with laundry, shopping and preparing meals.
- Skilled care or home health services to help with medication and other medical services.

Adult day centers offer a place where the person living with Alzheimer's can be with others in a safe environment.

- Staff leads planned activities, such as music and art programs.
- Transportation and meals are often provided.

Long-term care communities may offer the option for a stay overnight, for a few days or a few weeks.

- Overnight care allows caregivers to take an extended break or vacation while the person living with dementia stays in a supervised, safe environment.
- The cost for these services varies and is usually not covered by insurance or Medicare.

Group respite programs provide supervised, structured social activities in community locations.

- Often hosted in churches, community centers, or other local spaces.
- Offer social engagement and recreational activities in a supportive group environment.

Informal respite care can include flexible, on-demand care from family or friends.

- Assistance from family, friends, neighbors or volunteers.
- Flexible and occasional help.

Respite care for emergency situations should be planned ahead.

- Services for unexpected events like accidents or surgeries.
- Plan ahead and test services in non-emergency situations.



HOW TO CHOOSE A RESPITE CARE SERVICE

1. Identify your needs

- Type of care: Companionship, supervision, personal care or medical care.
- Individual experiences: Consider the communication style, support needs and unique expressions of the person living with dementia.
- Time required: Daily, weekly or overnight care.
- Preferred location: In-home, adult day centers or long-term care communities.

2. Research services

- Contact the local Alzheimer's Association® chapter, Area Agency on Aging or social service departments.
- Ask questions about staff qualifications and current training in dementia, services, costs and availability.

3. Evaluate options

- Meet with providers or visit respite sites.
- Assess cleanliness, staff interaction and environment.



PREPARING FOR CARE AND EVALUATING SERVICES

Preparing the Provider and Person Living with Dementia

- Share the person's history, characteristics and care techniques with the provider.
- Provide clear instructions and establish a relationship.
- Prepare the person living with dementia by explaining the situation in a way they can understand.
- Plan regular stays to help the person living with dementia adjust more easily to a new environment.
- Build your care team, share tasks and coordinate helpers using free, online care calendar resources.

Evaluating the Service

Periodically assess the service to ensure it meets your needs. Consider:

- What is working well?
- What can be improved?
- Are your needs being addressed?
- What do you need that your current service doesn't offer?

RESOURCES

Take the Next Step in Your Care Journey. Find Local Respite.

Alzheimer's Association Helpline

800.272.3900

Eldercare Locator

800.677.1116 or visit eldercare.acl.gov

Explore these tools and resources to help you build a strong support system and make informed decisions.

- [Community Resource Finder](#)
- [Creating Your Care Team](#)
- [Caregiver Support](#)
- [Get to Know Me form](#)

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