

Miami Valley Chapter

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Winter Safety Focus of Alzheimer's Association Miami Valley Chapter Advice for Alzheimer's Caregivers

DAYTON, OH—December 21, 2021—Wintertime, with its colder temperatures, snow, ice and early darkness, can be particularly treacherous, in particular for those living with Alzheimer's and other dementias. For the more than 220,000 unpaid caregivers in Ohio caring for someone with Alzheimer's and other dementias, the Alzheimer's Association offers guidance on keeping loved ones safe during the winter months.

The continuing COVID-19 pandemic has added additional complexities that can make providing care more overwhelming than ever. As winter ramps up, preparing in advance can make a big difference for caregivers of individuals living with Alzheimer's.

"Families and individuals of loved ones living with Alzheimer's should take advantage of the extensive suggestions and planning resources provided on the Alzheimer's Association Miami Valley Chapter website at www.alz.org/dayton," said Rebecca Hall, Alzheimer's Association Miami Valley Chapter program director. "There are valuable resources in the help and support sections on our website concerning safety, wandering behaviors, dementia and driving, and preparing for emergencies. Caregivers can also call us directly at 937.291.3332 for specific answers or assistance."

Advice regarding winter safety includes:

Be prepared

- Winter storms can be dangerous; check weather conditions and recommendations regularly, and have emergency plans in place.
- Tackle to-do lists in one trip to avoid having to make multiple trips.

Bundle up

- Help the person living with Alzheimer's dress warmly for winter weather conditions by wearing dry, loose-fitting layers and covering as much exposed skin as possible. Consider several layers of lightweight clothing for easy movement.
- A hat is important, as body heat escapes from an uncovered head. Mittens keep hands warmer than gloves and may be easier to help get on and off.

Prevent slips

- Balance and mobility are often a challenge for people living with Alzheimer's or dementia. Assume all surfaces are slick, and assist the person by taking smaller steps and slowing down to a safer gait and speed.
- Visual perception problems can make it difficult for the person living with Alzheimer's to see ice

on sidewalks, or realize that ice is slippery or that snow is not a solid surface.

Buddy up

- According to an Alzheimer's Association survey, a whopping 84 percent of caregivers said they would like more support in providing care for someone with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia, especially from their family.
- Don't hesitate to ask others for help with errands, grocery shopping, or snow and ice removal. It can be difficult for caregivers to find time to complete simple tasks outside of the home.

Prevent wandering

- It is estimated that 60% of people with dementia will wander and become lost at some point; many do so repeatedly. If not found within 24 hours, up to half of wandering individuals will suffer serious injury or death
- Wandering is one of the most frequent and challenging problems that caregivers face and can be extremely dangerous in colder conditions.
- Shorter days during winter months can also increase the risk of "sundowning," or increased confusion as night approaches. Monitor your loved ones closely for agitation or restlessness as day transitions into night.

About the Alzheimer's Association®

The Alzheimer's Association is a worldwide voluntary health organization dedicated to Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to lead the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementia®. Visit alz.org or call 800.272.3900.

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