



*Respite  
Rehabilitation  
Reassurance* **Harold's Cross  
Blackrock  
Wicklow**



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Wicklow**  
*Respite Rehabilitation Reassurance*

# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

## Carers' Information Booklet

### Caring for People Living with Dementia



Occupational Therapy Department

Our Lady's Hospice & Care Services  
Phone: 01-4068700

September 2021

## Dementia



**Dementia** is a physical illness that causes damage to brain cells. This damage may affect a person's ability to remember, think, speak and to do everyday activities. As dementia progresses, the changes become greater, and the person will need more help.

Currently there is no cure for dementia, but there is a lot that can be done to help the person with dementia and to help you, as their loved one and caregiver.

*While no one can change the outcome of dementia or Alzheimer's, with the right support you can change the journey.*

This booklet aims to provide information on:

- ⇒ Communication and managing behavior
- ⇒ Supporting engagement in meaningful activities
- ⇒ Promoting a safe, dementia friendly home environment
- ⇒ Using memory aids and technologies to promote independence with everyday living
- ⇒ Local supports and resources
- ⇒ Tips for managing your own health and well-being

## Support Services for Carers



### Events for Family Carer's

Weekly events including online exercise classes, zumba and yoga, organised walking groups, reflection and stress management sessions, training programmes and manual handling, leisure events, knitting, meditation and singing.

### Support Groups

Carer's support group, activity groups, special interest groups and an online community forum.

### Carer Support Manager

Assigned to each member to provide high quality, appropriate targeted supports based on the individual needs of the family member.

Dublin **contact**– [sodoherty@familycarers.ie](mailto:sodoherty@familycarers.ie) 016705976/0860213798.

### National Freephone Careline

Practical information and advice on topics such as carers allowance, carers benefit, support grants, counseling, respite services and services available from your local authority, HSE and Department of Social Protection.

**Free Phone:** 1800240721 9am-8pm Monday –Friday and 10am-12pm on Saturday.

### Membership

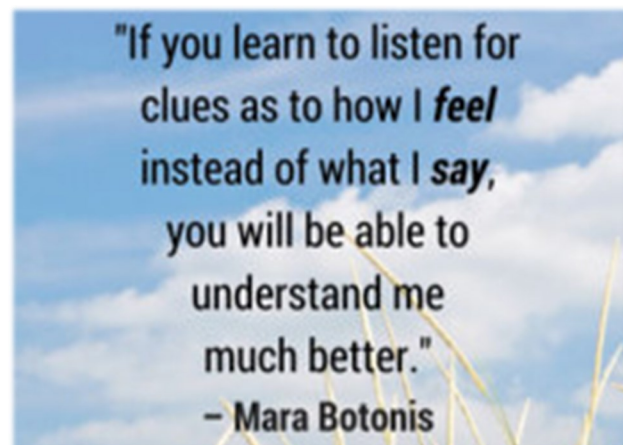
€ 20 annual fee

Complete **online membership** form on [www.familycarers.ie](http://www.familycarers.ie) or **email** [membership@familycarers.ie](mailto:membership@familycarers.ie)



## Communication

*Communication is vital to our sense of identity, It is important that we support people with dementia to express themselves.*



### Speaking

- Speak slowly, clearly and calmly
- Use short simple sentences
- Ask one question at a time
- Speak loud and clear but do not shout
- Avoid a sharp tone
- Keep it simple by asking yes/no answer questions

### Gaining Attention

- Make eye contact
- Ensure hearing aids/ glasses are worn
- Move to the same level as the person
- Reduce background noise and distractions such as TV and Radio

## Information for Carers



**Home Instead Alzheimer's and Other Dementia's Daily Companion App**– Searchable tips and practical solutions to help deal with behaviors and situations related to Alzheimer's and other dementias. Free to download on iOS and android - 'Alzheimer's Daily Companion'.



**understandtogether.ie**

Information about dementia, how to get support, training and resources.

**citizensinformation.ie**



Information on home care, respite care, carers allowance and benefits, carer support grant and carer leave entitlements.

**alzheimer.ie**

Numerous resources, factsheets and publications for carers and people living with dementia about diagnosis, treatment, day to day living and planning for the future.



## Carers—Looking After Yourself

To be in the best position to support your loved one with dementia it is important to take steps to look after your own health and wellbeing.



- **Be informed**— understanding dementia and the supports available can take away some uncertainties
- **Keep active**— incorporate regular exercise such as a daily walk, online exercise class, gardening, yoga
- Maintain a **healthy balanced diet**— but make sure to treat yourself with foods you enjoy
- Sleep well, **get rest**—speak to a professional if your sleep pattern is very disrupted or your loved one is awake during the night
- Pay attention to **your own health**—visit the GP and monitor for signs of excessive stress, low mood or anxiety
- **Stay connected**— with friends, family or support groups, build time into your day/ week to meet with others
- **Maintain hobbies and interests**— it is important to maintain your own personal identity
- **You time**— Put aside a time each day for yourself, have a cup of tea, read the paper, listen to music or go for a walk. Do not feel guilty about this it is important for your wellbeing.

“It is important to remember that you are only one person and there is a limit to what you can do”

“You can't be a carer 24/7; you can't be at the top of your game if you don't get time for yourself”

## Communication

### Listening

- Listen carefully, don't interrupt
- Allow extra time for the person to respond to you
- If a person can't finish a sentence, encourage them to explain it a different way
- Use what you know about them to guess what they mean but check back and reaffirm that you have the message correct.



### Other Methods

- **Non-verbal**; body language and physical contact e.g. pointing or demonstrating an action, using facial expressions and gestures
- **Humour**; can bring you closer and release tension
- **Life Story Books**; reminiscence encourages and sparks conversation about fond past memories

## Challenging Behavior

As Dementia progresses people often develop challenging behaviors. The behavior is commonly an attempt to communicate an unmet need.

Common challenging behaviors include;

- **Physical aggression**— pushing, pulling, punching
- **Verbal aggression**—shouting, swearing, screaming,
- **Other**— repetitive noises/questioning, excessive eating/drinking, following others, hoarding, urinating in inappropriate places.

### How can you manage these behaviors?

- ⇒ Maintain a **structured, familiar routine**. Routine helps to reduce stress and anxiety because every one involved knows what to expect. Consider set meal times, activity times, morning and night time routines.
- ⇒ Offer opportunities to **engage in familiar activities** that calm and re-assure, distract or divert attention.
  - **Music**- What are their favorite songs, tunes or instruments?
  - **Exercise**— walking, cycling, home exercise
  - **Special places**- Do they have a calm place they can go, like a quiet area or in the garden?



## Online Brain Health Resources

[www.hellobrain.eu](http://www.hellobrain.eu)- easy to understand information on brain health.



Free App—'Hello Brain' can be downloaded on iOS devices, google play or accessed free online. Scientifically designed exercises 'brain buffs' to help keep your brain fit and healthy.

[www.lumosity.com](http://www.lumosity.com)— daily exercise for your mind. Scientifically– validated tasks and games focusing on memory, attention, flexibility, processing speed and problem solving.

Free app 'Lumosity– brain training' also available on iOS devices and android.



mindmate

**Mind Mate**- daily activity plans to help keep your mind and body active. Includes games to stimulate your brain, exercise programmes for body and soul, nutrition advice and delicious recipes.

Available free online, on iOS and android.

**House of Memories**—Designed for people with dementia and their carers, allows you to browse through and reminisce about everyday objects from school to sport.

App can be downloaded free on iOS and android devices.



## Keeping the Brain Healthy

There is growing evidence to suggest that 'modifiable' lifestyle factors help to protect brain health and function.



There are five important steps that we can take to strengthen the brain and protect it from the damage of ageing or disease:



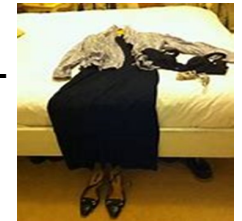
## Engaging in Meaningful Activities

As dementia progresses it can be more challenging to engage with activities previously enjoyed. Remaining engaged in activities is important to prevent boredom, provide opportunity for achievement, promote stimulation and self-esteem.

*We should enable people with dementia to maintain independence and existing skills by supporting them to do for themselves rather than doing for them.*

**Ways to support** this include:

- Breaking down a task into a **step-by-step** process. For example: laying clothes out in the order the person is getting dressed.
- **Pointing, demonstrating, or guiding an action** may sometimes be more helpful than verbal explanations. For example: the person may be able to brush their own hair if you start by gently guiding their hand.
- **Encouragement to help with simple tasks** - Simple, repetitive tasks like folding laundry can lead to feelings of accomplishment.
- **Maximise the possibility of success** by adapting the activity to a suitable level for the individual, ensuring it is not too difficult.



## Activity Ideas

### Household Activities

Maintaining engagement in roles and responsibilities within the home is important for people's sense of achievement and identity. E.G. Baking, Cooking, Gardening, Laundry



### Physical Activities

Physical activity is important for maintaining strength, sleep, enhancing mood and stimulating the mind.

If getting out for walks is challenging, seated exercises or light household activities are good alternatives.



### Reminiscence

People with dementia remember the past more easily as it has been imbedded in their minds. Share stories and memories from the past that are positive and enjoyable.

Creating a life story book, memory box or reviewing books on local/ family history can be enjoyable.

### Stimulating Activities

Games and puzzles such as jigsaws, card games, board games, word searches and arts and crafts can be enjoyable while also providing stimulation and challenging the mind.



## Cognitive Stimulation Therapy

### What is CST?

CST is a social and activity group for people with dementia. The sessions aim to actively stimulate and engage people with dementia providing an environment for optimal learning and an opportunity to meet new people.



### What are the benefits of CST?

CST keeps the brain active; It may improve memory and concentration; provides a supportive environment for social interaction; focuses on strengths rather than difficulties; provides a chance to meet new people, reminisce and have fun.

### Is there any evidence to support CST?

There is evidence to suggest that CST improves memory and quality of life for people with dementia. It can also enhance communication and social interaction.

### To express your interest in attending a CST group -

Contact the CRU Occupational Therapy Department:  
Phone 01-4068711 / email: [otcru@olh.ie](mailto:otcru@olh.ie).

Please note you must be under the care of a geriatrician.



## Memory Technology Resource Room

### Memory Technology Resource Rooms -

Showcase a range of Assistive Technologies and provide assessment and guidance on different low-tech and higher-tech equipment that may be helpful for addressing the needs of people with dementia and/or other memory difficulties and their family/carers.



As a predominantly Occupational Therapy led programme, the MTRRs also provide an opportunity for wider assessment of client needs and provision of advice on non-technological approaches and solutions that may be helpful.

#### South Dublin Locations:

The Memory Harbor, Clonskeagh Hospital, Dublin 4  
St. Columcille's Hospital, Loughlinstown, Co. Dublin

#### West Dublin Locations:

Ballyfermot Primary Care Centre, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10

You can contact your local clinic to make a referral or through a health professional such as your GP.

## Activities for Later Stages of Dementia

**Sensory stimulation** involves providing opportunities to activate one or more of the five senses. It is particularly beneficial for people with communication and self expression difficulties and can have a positive impact on mood by sparking pleasant memories and emotions.

### Ways to facilitate sensory engagement include:

- \* Listening to familiar music
- \* Being read to from favorite books, poetry collections or audio books
- \* Having prayers said
- \* Looking at family photographs
- \* Watching movies or musicals
- \* Smelling flowers
- \* Feeling a variety of different fabrics and objects
- \* Eating small, tasty treats
- \* Personal care activities that involve touching such as gentle brushing of hair, using a foot spa, having a neck or hand massage with scented oils or lotions



# Dementia Friendly Environments

The layout and design of the home can have a significant impact on somebody with dementia. Memory loss, confusion and difficulties with new learning may impact people with dementia remembering where they are, where things are and how things work.

There are some simple changes we can make to support somebody with dementia to continue living independently at home.



# Assistive Technology

**Assistive Technology** is any device, product, gadget or system that helps with memory to promote independence, communication and safety both inside and outside the home.

<p><b>Orientation</b></p> <p>Digital Orientation Clock</p> <p>Talking Tiles</p> <p>Record audible reminders for appliances or a comforting message to playback</p>	<p><b>Safety Technologies</b></p> <p>Pendant Alarm</p> <p>Bed Sensor</p> <p>Motion Sensor</p> <p>Motion Light Sensor</p>
<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p>Easy to use Phones</p> <p>Automatic Pill Dispenser</p> <p>Dispenses at the exact time the dose it due. Up to 6 daily audio and visual alarms.</p>	<p><b>Leisure Activities</b></p> <p>One Button Radio</p> <p>Easy to use Remote</p> <p>Talking Photo Album</p>

## Memory Aids

### Signs and Reminders

For Example:

- A sign on the front door as a reminder to bring keys when going out
- Set alarms on a mobile phone as a reminder to take medication



### Medication

Ask your pharmacist about blister packs or pill boxes to help keep track of medication



### Checklists

Regular daily routines help to organise time and remember what to do. E.g. get up, have a wash, put on clothes, have breakfast.

Use a checklist to organise daily/weekly tasks.

Use safety checklists to ensure necessary steps are completed before leaving the house e.g. windows are shut, alarm is on,

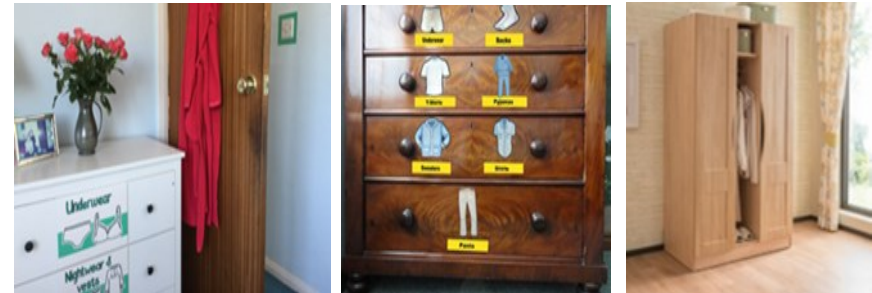
#### THINGS TO DO TODAY

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ COMPLETED

1)	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
2)	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
3)	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
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10)	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Knowing Where Things Are

If you have problems with memory, you may forget where you keep things. Putting labels on the outside of cupboards, wardrobes and drawers may help. Transparent doors and open cupboards also make it easier to find things.



Organise cupboards so commonly used items and appliances are positioned at the front or are easy to find. Think about removing doors that hide appliances such as the washing machine.



## Colour and Pattern

**Colour and pattern** can make a difference to how easily you find your way around the house.

Contrast the **colour** of furniture such as bed, tables, chairs and lamps with the walls and floor so that they stand out. Contrast the color of light switches and appliances with the wall so they can be easily seen.



**Stripes or strong patterns** can be confusing and disorientating, these should be simplified where possible. As dementia progresses paintings, artwork and mirrors may also become confusing and need to be removed.



## Memory Aids

### Memory Box



Try to keep items used daily in the same, visible place eg: on the hall table

A memory box (simply a basket/container) can be useful

Items to put in a memory box: keys, wallet,

### Calendar



Keep the calendar in one central, prominent location.

Use it to record important dates, appointments, anniversaries, birthdays.

Remember to **check it regularly!!**

### Diary

What to include:

- Daily schedule: plans for the day
- Useful phone numbers
- Birthdays, anniversaries, appointments

Check the diary daily and look ahead to see



## Getting Outside

Getting outdoors encourages physical activity, improves wellbeing and can be therapeutic.



Brightly painted front door aids recognition



Distinct colours and planting highlight the entrance



Easily accessible, safe and interesting outdoor space to encourage people to go outside

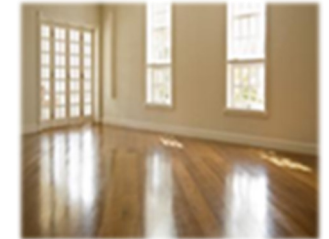
## Lighting

Dementia can make it difficult to keep track of time and understand where you are. It is important to allow lots of natural light into the house to help differentiate between day and night. Move curtains, blinds, furniture, TV's, plants so they don't block the light.



Use brighter bulbs or extra lights to see clearly around your home. This is especially important in dark areas such as on the stairs or in rooms without windows.

Avoid using high gloss finishes or floor surfaces that highlight reflections. A person with dementia may perceive these surfaces as wet or as a mirror.



Sensor lights that come on automatically when they sense motion or touch lamps are useful if the individual gets up at night, or struggles to find light switches in the dark.

Make sure the bedroom can be made dark, as this will help the person to sleep better.



## Storing items

Clutter in the home can be distracting and cause confusion. Clutter and unused items should be removed including unnecessary rugs, cushions and throws to reduce trip hazards.



Clutter can make it difficult to find the things you often use. Make sure cupboards and drawers are tidy and organised .



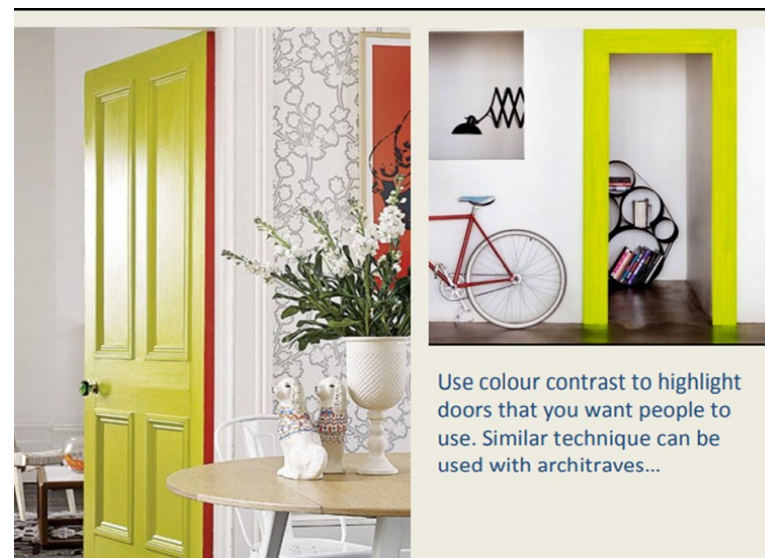
Consider having a basket, tray or designated space for important paper work and essential items—glasses, keys phone and ensure to put things back where they belong once finished with them.



Make sure that people closest to the individual are aware of where important items and documents are kept incase they cant find them or in the event of an emergency.

Carers, friends and family **should not move items** or furniture and always put them back in the designated space once finished.

## Safety in the Home



Use colour contrast to highlight doors that you want people to use. Similar technique can be used with architraves...



Curtain as camouflage. Disguising a door with a curtain can discourage use at inappropriate times