

Moving and handling

If you are looking after a person with dementia you will want to do everything you can to ensure that they remain as healthy and mobile as possible. Eventually, however, they may need help with standing and moving around. Each person is different and will respond to situations in their own way but here are some suggestions, which you may find helpful

Keeping mobile

- *Try to approach the person in a calm, relaxed way, even if you are feeling very harassed yourself. You are far more likely to be successful if the person does not feel anxious or rushed.*
- *If necessary, you can then break down the action into small segments, offering suitable encouragement such as "Now put your hand there, that's right".*

It is important to encourage the person to exercise regularly and to do things for themselves as far as possible. This will help them stay fit, will improve their quality of life and will make caring less tiring for you.

Walking and other forms of movement will help to prevent joint stiffness, muscle wasting and bone softening and improve circulation. All this will help to promote a general feeling of well-being.



As dementia progresses you may need to become more ingenious in persuading the person to be active, and they may need more assistance from you to move around. An occupational therapist (OT) or physiotherapist can give you advice on suitable exercises for people in all stages of dementia and on the safest ways of helping the person move. To find an OT contact your community health clinic, or your G.P.



Ref. sundisabilityconsultants.co.uk

If the person seems unwilling to co-operate, it may be better to leave them for a little while and then try again. Attempting to help someone to move who is unwilling is more likely to cause you both physical strain.

Co-operation

It is essential to gain the person's co-operation, whether you are physically assisting them to move or simply suggesting that they should do so.

- Try to approach the person in a calm, relaxed way, even if you are feeling very harassed yourself. You are far more likely to be successful if the person does not feel anxious or rushed.
- Turn off the radio or television if they are causing a distraction.
- Spend time explaining what you would like the person to do . such as getting up from the chair, or putting on their coat. Even if the person can no longer understand the words that you are saying, the sound of your voice and the expression on your face can help to reassure them.
- If necessary, you can then break down the action into small segments, offering suitable encouragement such as "Now put your hand there, that's right".
- You may be able to find other ways of communicating with the person, for example, by demonstrating an action yourself or by gently guiding their movements.
- If the person seems unwilling to co-operate, it may be better to leave them for a little while and then try again. Attempting to help someone to move who is unwilling is more likely to cause you both physical strain.

Safety

If the person with dementia is moving about or you are helping them to move, make sure that the area is clear and safe.

Loose rugs, slippery floors, trailing flexes, unsteady furniture or obstacles in the way are a hazard for anyone. They are particularly dangerous for a person who is confused and perhaps unsteady on their feet. The person who is helping them may also be at risk. There is no need for a clinical tidiness in the house if that is not what the person is used to. However, make sure that there is no clutter on the floors or stairs where either of you could trip.

Make sure, too, that neither of you are wearing footwear which is slippery.

Take special care when you are feeling tired, as that is when accidents are most likely to occur

Aids and adaptations

These may make it easier for the person with dementia to move and for you to assist them. Obtain advice on the possibility of rails and other aids to help the person get in and out of the bath, on and off the toilet, or round the house. Walking aids are available if necessary. Consider ways of raising the height of a chair or a bed, for example, or how to rearrange the furniture to make it easier for you to assist the person to move.

Advice on handling

Never attempt to carry anyone on your own as you could severely damage yourself and harm the person you are looking after.

Even supporting someone who is very heavy or dependent can be risky, unless you are very careful. That is why it is so important to ask for advice on the safest way to support the person from an occupational therapist or physiotherapist.

Helping the person out of a chair

It is harder to get up from a low chair. If the chair is too low for the person, a cushion on the seat may help. Chairs with firm arms can help someone manage independently for longer.

Never attempt to carry anyone on your own as you could severely damage yourself and harm the person you are looking after.

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If they can co-operate easily...

- Stand at the side of the chair and encourage the person to move to the edge of the chair near you.
- Their feet should be firmly on the ground and tucked back.
- Take hold of the hand nearest to you, palm to palm, and your other hand firmly against the trunk, under their arm on the opposite side.
- You can support them to stand up.
- If you need to bend forward, bend your knees, not your back.

If they need a little more help

- Stand in front of them and put their arms round the top of your shoulders (not your neck) and your hands against the small of their back.
- Your knees should be against their knees with your feet blocking their feet.
- Keep your back as straight as you can as you help them up. If you need to bend forward, bend your knees.

Helping the person out of bed

- Assist the person to roll onto their side at the edge of the bed where you are standing.
- Guide them to bring their legs over the bed and then to a sitting position, putting their feet firmly on the floor.
- You can then help them up as from a chair

Helping someone up from the floor

If the person has had a fall first ensures that they are not injured. If you think they have been hurt make them comfortable and call for help. If they are not injured assist them to get up.

- Put a firm chair at their side.
- Help them to kneel and place one hand on the chair, leaning against it.
- Take hold of their other hand and support them under their arm, against their trunk with your free hand.
- Encourage the person to push on the chair with their hand and bend knee while you help them to stand.
- If the person is unable to co-operate or if they are too heavy . and if the floor is warm and comfortable . make them comfortable with a blanket and pillow and let them stay there until you can get help.

If you have any problems with any of these activities ask a physiotherapist or occupational therapist for advice.

Notes:

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