



# Visits

The following tips may help to make visits with people living with dementia to be effective and meaningful:

- Each time you visit, introduce yourself and explain why you are there.
- Call the person by name.
- Don't ask if he/she remembers you—even if you've been coming for years.
- Smile and look friendly.
- Make eye contact.
- Speak to the person as your friend.
- Speak distinctly and not too rapidly. Use short, simple sentences.
- Avoid using too many pronouns. The person may get lost in the “he's” and “she's.”
- Be prepared to listen.
- Give the person time to respond. Be patient, and avoid jumping in.
- Be interested and ask questions, but avoid interrogating.
- Respond with affection and reassurance.
- Maintain your sense of humor. Laugh whenever you can.
- Be aware of possible hearing loss and adjust the volume of your voice accordingly.
- Do not talk down to the person or use terms such as “baby” or “sweetie.”
- Look for cues the person wants to shake hands, have an arm patted, or receive a hug.
- Do not take it personally if the person seems rude, walks away, or even becomes angry during a visit.

## **Set a convenient time and consider how long you should stay.**

Find out the best time of day to visit. It may be during the middle of the day when the person you're visiting isn't tired. Make sure the length of your visit is appropriate. Every person is different, so check with the caregiver or others who visit about what's best.

## **Prepare what you want to bring.**

Photographs, videos, and letters can be effective ways of connecting with the person you're visiting. If there is a particular treat the person enjoys, try to bring that. You may also want to consider bringing an activity to do with the person.

## **Make the environment pleasant.**

Reducing background noise by turning off a TV, closing a door, or shutting a window can help make the visit peaceful, more focused, and less confusing.

## **Ask the person what they want to do.**

By encouraging the person you're visiting to make decisions about how you spend time together that day, you enhance his/her independence and self-esteem. It is generally a good idea to limit the choices. For example, try asking “Would you like to go for a walk?”

## **Visitor Guest Book**

A person living with dementia may have many people involved in their circle of support—a neighbor who drops by regularly, family members, and friends. As his/her dementia progresses and the person receives more assistance, that circle may grow to include visits from service providers (such as social workers, occupational therapists, nurses, etc.) and volunteers. It can become difficult to remember all the activities, who is involved, and how they are contributing to the person's day.

A visitor guest book serves as a reminder of who has come to visit, as well as how they spent their time together with the person living with dementia. It can be helpful as a conversation starter for other visitors and for the person living with dementia to remember what has happened.

An inexpensive notebook or a journal can be kept in a location in the home where visitors will easily locate it (such as by the front door). It can include such things as photos; wishes the person has expressed; descriptions of visits and conversations; or drawings to highlight feelings during visits.

The following information should always be included:

- The date of visit.
- The visitor's name.
- How the visitor and the person spent their time together.
- If and when the visitor will return (try to be as specific as possible).