

Hiring Home Care Help

At some point on this journey, you will probably need to hire care partners from a home health agency or enroll in hospice. It is very difficult to be the sole care partner. Please don't feel guilty about asking for help. We all need to work as a team, as a community, to support those living with dementia and to support you, the primary care partner. It may be uncomfortable for you to allow strangers into your home and it can be hard for a person with dementia to have someone new in their home, to listen to someone they do not know, and even want help in the first place. How do you know if you have picked the right person? How do you know if a care partner or organization is experienced in dementia?

Where to start? Start with These Tips:

Think about the type of help you need.

Home care services can help with companionship, housekeeping, errands, bathing, dressing, and medication administration. There are different levels of care with different costs. Ask if insurance will cover the services.

Make sure people who interact with your loved one have training in dementia care.

Many organizations will tell you that their staff is trained in dementia care, but often the staff just received a one-hour video training. Ask the agency and any staff to describe the training they have received and discuss with you what they have learned.

Hire help as early as possible.

Rather than waiting until dementia has progressed for years and the person really needs 24/7 care, start hiring people to help around the house early, even if it is just for a few hours a week. This way the person with dementia gets used to having help at a time when they may be more willing to have help or when their brain can understand the need for help. Consider hiring someone to clean the house once a month, or get groceries delivered periodically. The more routine it becomes to have non-family and friends helping, the easier it is later on when more care is needed.

Introduce new people into the environment slowly.

Rather than having a hired care partner come in and start helping with bathing and dressing, have a few weeks of visits where they come in and do an activity with your loved one or have a snack together.

Use memory supports to help create relationships.

Hired care partners are new and can be hard for people to remember. Consider taking a photo of the care

partner and the person with dementia together and write the care partner's name underneath the photo with a brief explanation about why they are in the home.

Focus on empathy.

If your loved one does not want help or believes they do not need it, try to understand the emotions behind the reaction. Having help may make them feel like we are taking away their personal control. Have a conversation about how the hired care partner is not only for your loved one but for you as well. Mention how you all need help sometimes and how you would feel a lot better if you got help that you needed. Also let them know that you don't want to take away their independence or autonomy and that any care partner hired will need to also be someone who helps your loved one be as independent and successful as possible.

Ask people you trust for referrals.

It is hard to know which home care agency or private home care giver is best. Word of mouth is a great way to find dependable help, so ask your friends. To locate and compare Medicare-approved home health agencies, visit [medicare.gov/care-compare](https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare), and see the [“Medicare and Home Health Care” online publication](#) that explains coverage and how to choose an agency.

Observe the new care partner and look for these signs of positive interactions:

- Speaking clearly and slowly and not yelling.
- Approaching the person from the front.
- Always letting the person know what they are doing before they do it such as, “I am going to help you get up from your chair now, may I take your hand?”
- Showing your loved one how to do something rather than taking tasks away from them.
- No arguing or confrontation.
- Engaging your loved one throughout the day rather than letting your loved one sit in front of the TV or lie in bed for long periods of time.
- Not trying to prove that what your loved one feels or thinks is wrong, even if it is technically inaccurate.



What you can do!

Make an “About Me” handout for the new care partner that is filled with fun and interesting facts about your loved one.

This will help the new care partner to get to know the person. If the care partner is willing, ask her or him to do the same, so you and your loved one build a relationship with this new member of the care team.

Ideas for the About Me Page

- Favorite foods / foods to avoid
- Hobbies
- Profession
- Favorite and least favorite ways to spend time
- Names of children and grandchildren
- Pets
- Places lived or visited
- Preferred music
- Any special directions about how the person likes to be assisted with personal care