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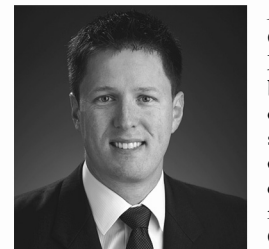
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BOOMERS & BEYOND

How to choose a dementia caregiver

When a loved one is diagnosed with dementia, a family's life can turn upside down. In such situations, families may not know much about the disease, including what to expect with treatment and how soon before the dementia patient begins to need care that the family cannot capably provide.

Over time, dementia patients' loved ones are likely to benefit from the expertise and assistance of qualified dementia caregivers. It can be overwhelming for loved ones to offer the right level of care for someone who is unable to perform the activities of daily living. Bathing, medication management, dressing, and feeding are often very difficult for dementia patients.

The Alzheimer's Association says that providing good care for someone with dementia goes beyond meeting basic needs. It also means finding caregivers

who treat the whole person and provide an environment that can enable the person to be safe yet independent.

In order to get started, one should first assess the needs of their loved one with dementia. How many services he or she will require depends on whether that person can use the bathroom, walk, eat, or bathe independently. Alz.org says care needs tend to be lesser in the early stages of dementia. However, during the middle and end stages of dementia, 24-hour supervision and potentially more intensive medical care may be necessary.

Some families start with a visiting caregiver who can come to the house. For example, a service like Visiting Angels is certified to offer care according to advanced dementia care protocols after working with leading dementia specialists. Caregivers may offer



companionship and helpful reminders. Others may assist clients with personal tasks. One key aspect of dementia care is preventing wandering. Alz.org indicates that six in 10 people with dementia will wander. A person with Alzheimer's may not remember his or her name or address and can become disoriented, even in familiar places. Caregivers can put protocols in place to help reduce wandering. Alert bracelets and GPS tracking devices can help in this regard as well.

can help families transition someone with dementia to nursing facilities with memory care divisions. Social workers and other aides may help families navigate the legalities of medical insurance and long-term care insurance as well as government assistance programs that may help offset the costs of more intensive care.

It's never too soon to develop a care plan for someone with dementia. Qualified and compassionate caregivers can help ease the burden of dementia on patients and their families.

At some point, caregivers

Staying Safe and Warm

Like it or not, here it comes again: winter, along with snow and ice in many parts of the country. As seniors we need to take extra steps to stay safe, warm and healthy during cold weather.

Investigate now whether your grocery store delivers. Groceries brought to your door can be a wonderful help when you can't get out. Also keep on hand a few days' worth of extra canned goods such as beans, fruits and vegetables, as well as

cereals.

Start now to find indoor walking locations, especially if you get lots of snow and ice. Enclosed malls often open early to allow walkers. Look for local indoor tracks, perhaps as part of the parks and rec department. As incentive to keep to a routine, corral a few friends who also want to walk on a regular basis. If nothing else, use the aisles of the big box stores or ask about senior fees at the YMCA.

Remember to get out among people. It's healthier for us to have social connections so we don't feel isolated, which can lead to depression. Look for an interesting weekly group to join. Call others to check in on days you can't get out. Check your supply of warm winter clothing. A hat, coat and gloves are a good place to start, followed by socks and a scarf. Remember to dress in loose layers that trap body heat. Hypothermia and frostbite can affect

us faster than when we were younger. Put a thermometer outside your door or window so you know what to expect.

Be sure you have enough batteries and flashlights in case of a power outage. Contact the National Energy Assistance Referral service at 1-866-674-6327 if you have trouble paying your heating bill, or think you will. Call them sooner rather than later, as many organizations have a set budget amount each year.

Hand Sanitizers and the Flu

With flu season just around the corner, there's a new wrinkle to staying healthy this winter. Our old standby, the antiseptic hand sanitizer, has been found to not work as well as we believed, especially with the influenza A strain. It's all in how we use it, according to a recent study.

First, choose a hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. Be sure to cover your whole hands, including nails. If you come in contact with wet mucus

(from a sneeze or cough), it takes the sanitizer a full four minutes to kill the flu virus. (How many of us use sanitizer for four minutes? Not many.) Dry mucus (for example, on a shopping cart handle) takes less time. Hand washing, however, takes only 30 seconds to kill the flu virus and is thought to be more effective than using sanitizer.

Here are some ideas for flu season:

-- Does your grocery store deliver to your home

or the parking lot? This will reduce your exposure.

-- Take some antiseptic wipes in a plastic baggie when you go out. Use them on the cart handles in stores. Carry a small refillable bottle of hand sanitizer.

-- Wash your hands thoroughly when you get home.

-- Once a week (or more often) wrap hand wipes around door knobs at home and let them dry overnight.

The biggest step we can take is to get a flu shot. The

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests the high-dose flu vaccine for seniors because it creates a stronger immune response, 24% higher than the standard vaccine. There's also an adjuvanted and a recombinant vaccine (not made with eggs). Ask your doctor which you should get. Remember that it takes a few weeks for the vaccine to take effect.

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