

MEMORY CARE TIP

Communicating About Infection Prevention

Dementia is not just memory loss; it also affects the brain's ability to receive and process information. We know at least two parts of the brain are dying. Cells are deteriorating, brain tissue is lost, and the overall size of the brain shrinks.

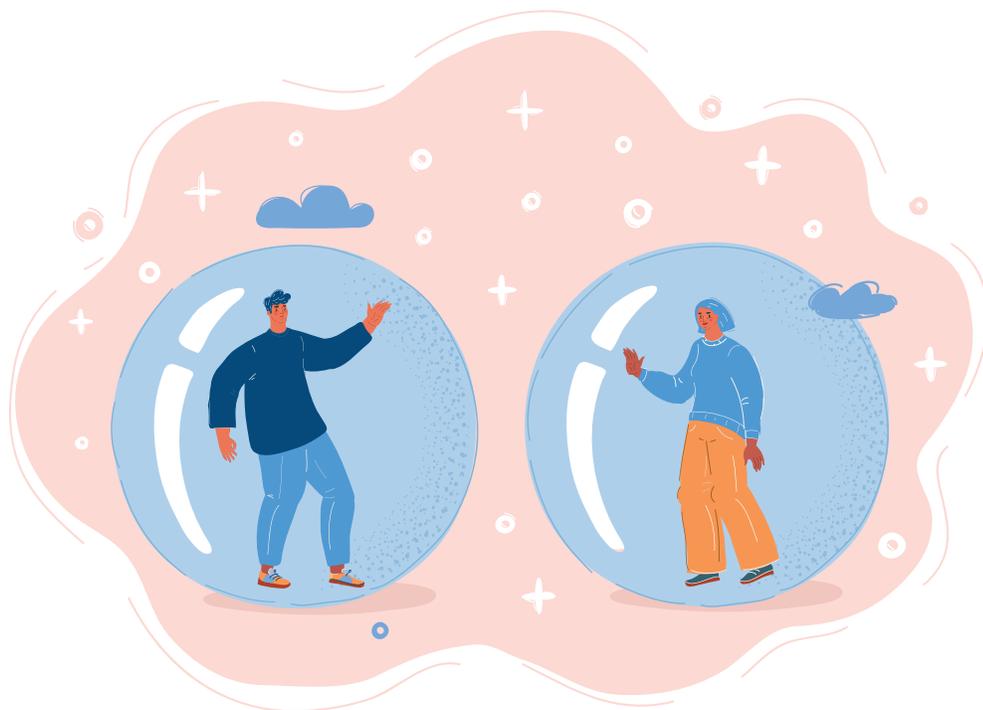
Approximately one of every four words that you speak to a person living with dementia will not register in their brain.

The language center, which is located in the left side of the brain, tends to deteriorate first. This results in loss of vocabulary and speech ability and slowing comprehension capacity.

Approximately one of every four words that you speak to a person living with dementia will not register in their brain. So, it's hard for them to comprehend what you are saying, especially if you speak too fast or use complex sentences.

So how can we use this information to better care for people living with dementia during the pandemic? What is the best way to communicate to them the importance of hand hygiene, mask wearing, and physical distancing? Ever-changing rules are confusing to them, scary, and frustrating.

(See "Dementia" on page 4)



Infection Control in the Home

Here comes cold and flu season and, yes, we're still battling the COVID-19 pandemic. If someone in your household is an older adult or has certain underlying medical conditions, then all household members should act as if they are at an increased risk for severe illness and take special precautions. If you don't, then the effort put toward protection of your sensitive person(s) goes to waste if other residents are careless in public and bring germs back home.

Although you can't live in a bubble, you can practice extra infection-control measures if you live with someone who's at high risk of major illness.

Stay home as much as possible. Easier said than done, but the reality is that each time you go out into a public space, you're encountering microscopic enemies ready to attack. The increased availability of grocery delivery, curbside pickup, and restaurant take-out service makes being homebound a bit easier.

Wear a mask (KN-95 if possible) whenever you do leave the home, regardless of your region's current mask-wearing regulations.

Abide by physical distancing recommendations of at least 6 feet.

Frequent hand washing has never been more critical. Wash with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you've been out in public, have coughed or sneezed, or have come into contact with a high-touch surface. Dry with a clean paper towel, not a reusable cloth. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer made with at least 60 percent alcohol.

(See "Infection control" on page 2)

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Infection control *(continued from page 1)*

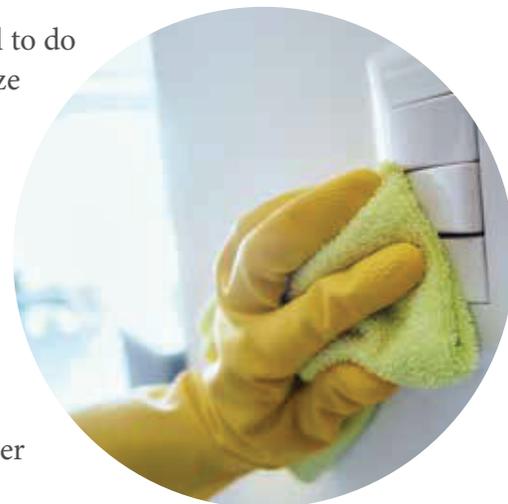
Keep your hands off your face. Even the best hand washers will still harbor bacteria and virus picked up from whatever they touch. Don't give the germs a free ride to your orifices.

Don't hug, kiss, touch hands, or share food and beverage with people who are at an increased risk in your household. It's also a good rule of thumb for all people during flu season.

Avoid having visitors into your home. In an emergency, like needing a home repair person, advise the guest of your high-risk household and be sure they do not have symptoms of illness. Any guest in your home must wear a mask and wash their hands.

Create good airflow. When it's practical to do so, open windows to create a cross-breeze of fresh air.

Regularly clean high-touch surfaces and any shared items like doorknobs, counter tops, toilets, cabinet handles, TV remotes, and such. Thorough cleaning involves two steps: wiping objects and surfaces with a household cleaning product to remove dirt and grime, followed by spraying with a proper disinfectant such as Lysol. ➤



Hand Washing—Take Your Time With This Simple Task

Hand washing is the single most important way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. It's best to use an antimicrobial soap during these concerning times, but any hand soap will work if you follow proper protocol:

Rub your wet hands together with soap for at least 20 seconds to produce lots of lather. Use antimicrobial soap if available. Lather-up away from running water so that the lather is not washed away.

Wash thoroughly—front and back of hands, between fingers, and at least two inches up your wrists.

Rinse well under warm running water.

Dry your hands on a clean cloth or paper towel, not a reusable towel.



NOTE The CDC recommends using alcohol-based hand rubs with 60–95 percent alcohol in healthcare settings. Unless hands are visibly soiled, an alcohol-based hand rub is preferred over soap and water in most clinical situations due to evidence of better compliance compared to soap and water. ➤



QUICK QUIZ

Read the issue and answer True or False to the questions below.

Face Masks Protect Us All

The topic of mask wearing (and whether to require it or—gasp—disallow it) has made the rounds in national news media and political circles over the past 18 months. Here are the facts according to the CDC.

COVID-19 mainly spreads through respiratory droplets that travel into the air when you cough, sneeze, talk, shout, or sing. People who are near you can breathe in these droplets. Masks are a simple barrier to help prevent one person's respiratory droplets from reaching others.

If you are vaccinated, it's less likely that you would contract the virus or that'd you'd get extremely sick if you do. But it is still possible for you to infect others: You can breathe virus particles into your upper respiratory system, carry them in your body to another location, and exhale them near another person. Wearing a mask reduces this transmission risk.

Regardless of any loosening of official mask mandates, all people should mask up in these scenarios:

- All indoor public settings.
- Outdoor public settings when you cannot maintain at least 6 feet physical distancing.
- On any type of public transportation, even in waiting/boarding areas.
- When you are around people who do not live with you, including inside your home or inside someone else's home.
- Inside your home if someone you live with is feeling sick or has tested positive for COVID-19. ➔

DO choose masks that



Have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric



Completely cover your nose and mouth



Fit snugly against the sides of your face and don't have gaps



Have a nose wire to prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask

DO NOT choose masks that



Are made of fabric that makes it hard to breathe, for example, vinyl



Have exhalation valves or vents, which allow virus particles to escape



Unless you are a healthcare worker, you do not need to use an N95 mask.



CS 110816 © April 28, 2021 8:45 AM

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)

1. COVID-19 mainly spreads through respiratory droplets in the air.

True or False

2. Hand washing is the single most important way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

True or False

3. People who live in a home with an immunocompromised person don't need to take special precautions if they are vaccinated against COVID-19.

True or False

4. A thorough cleaning of household surfaces involves both removing dirt and spraying a disinfectant.

True or False

5. Proper hand washing requires soapy friction for at least 10 seconds.

True or False

6. The brain of a person living with dementia registers only three of every four words spoken to them.

True or False

7. People with dementia have difficulty understanding what you are saying, so speak to them like you would a child.

True or False

8. Masks are a simple barrier to help prevent one person's respiratory droplets from reaching others.

True or False

9. If you have had the COVID-19 vaccine, you cannot catch the virus.

True or False

10. Face masks with a ventilation port are the best type for everyday wear.

True or False

Find the quiz answers at the bottom of page 4.

When language is a challenge, care providers can use visual cues to help demonstrate what they are trying to accomplish.

For example, the patient doesn't understand when you say, "let's go wash your hands, so that we can eat dinner." Instead, you can use a combination of hand gestures and simple phrases to get my request across. Say, "Sue, look," while rubbing your hands together at the sink. "Your turn, Sue."

Keep it simple. There's no need to explain in so many words that "we're in a pandemic and we need to wash our hands all the time to prevent sickness." (By the way, paranoia is another common development in people living with dementia. Using terms like *pandemic* or *worldwide*

virus outbreak can unnecessarily incite panic, fear, and worrying.)

Note how the first statement has compound concepts "wash hands"

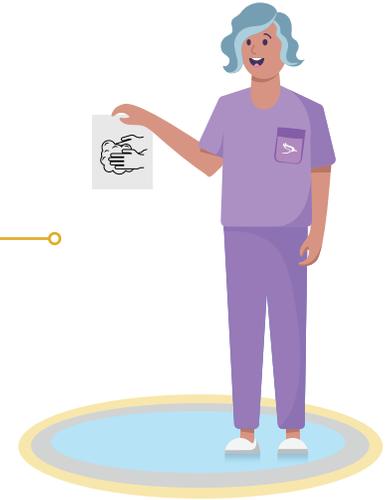
Check in daily with yourself to be sure you are doing everything you can to preserve your patient's dignity.

and "eat dinner." Deal with the steps one at a time so as not to overload the person's brain with instruction.

Pictures or posters that simply demonstrate the hand-washing process may help the message click. Try a combination of a basic request phrase with your hand gestures, then point to the picture.

In dementia care, it's important not to treat our patients/loved

ones like children. Yet when someone is exhibiting diminishing comprehension skills, it's easy to slip up and speak to them in a demeaning way, even unintentionally. Check in daily with yourself to be sure you are doing everything you can to preserve your patient's dignity. Practice patience and compassion. ➤



Senior-Care Education

Hope Hospice is committed to helping our community offer the best care to seniors. Our experts are available to present complimentary educational seminars to professionals in the medical field and the public. If you oversee a team of care providers or senior living community who would benefit from a refresher on such topics as hospice, best practices in dementia care, or any of the other subjects listed at right, please connect today to discuss your needs. We are available to present in-person at your facility or over Zoom teleconference. ➤

Available Topics

- Agitation/terminal restlessness
- Advance healthcare directives
- Body mechanics
- Dementia care
- Fall prevention
- Hospice education
- Medication administration
- MRSA/C-Diff
- Nutrition for seniors
- Pain in the elderly
- Respiratory concerns
- Skin care of the elderly

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please connect with Hope Hospice Director of Outreach, Kari Rayford, LVN, at karir@hopehospice.com or (925) 829-8770 to discuss your team's needs.