

## ***Alzheimer's and Dementia Preparedness Tips for Hurricane***

Emergency situations, such as a hurricane can significantly impact everyone's safety, and can be very upsetting and confusing for individuals living with Alzheimer's and other dementias at any stage of the disease. Being prepared is crucial. There are steps and precautions caregivers can take to be as ready as possible

### **Advanced Preparations**

- If the person with dementia lives in a residential home or attends the day care programme at the Pines e.g., learn about its disaster and evacuation plans. Find out who is responsible for evacuating everyone in the event of an emergency.
- Be sure the evacuation plan takes special needs into consideration. For example, if a walker or wheelchair is used, how will accommodations be made?
- If oxygen is used, be sure there is easy access to portable tanks.
- Purchase extra medication; keep other supplies well stocked.
- Provide copies of the person's medical history, a list of medications, Doctors information and family contacts to people other than a partner/spouse. Keep all of this information in a water proof bag e.g. Ziploc bag.

*Have the person's favourite items or foods on hand.*

- Have the person's favourite items or foods, including liquid meal eg. ensure or glucerna.
- Their favourite item eg. book, picture, toy or handbag.
- Phone numbers for the Alzheimer's Association – 936-1655 or 924-4170

*Prepare an emergency kit in a watertight container.*

- Consider preparing an emergency kit in a watertight container and store it in an easily accessible location. Use waterproof bags to protect medications and documents. Items you may wish to include are:
  - Easy on/off clothes (a couple of sets)
  - Supplies of medication (or, at least, a list of medications with dosages)

- Velcro shoes/sneakers
- A spare pair of eyeglasses
- Incontinence products, eg. depends
- Extra identification items such as an ID bracelet and clothing tags
- Copies of legal documents such as Power of Attorney and/or Guardianship Orders
- Copies of medical documents that indicate the disease and current medications
- Copies of insurance policy or policies
- Doctor's name, address and phone numbers (ensure you have a cell phone number)
- Recent picture of the person with dementia
- Hand lotion or other comfort items
- Bottled water

### ***When You Know That an Emergency Is About to Take Place***

*Get yourself and the person with dementia to a safe place.*

- Get yourself and the person with Alzheimer's to a safe place, and bring the emergency kit with you if this can be done safely.
- If the need to evacuate is likely, do not delay. Try to leave as early as possible, as people with dementia do not move quickly. Try to keep calm, since the person may become easily agitated or even confused. Leaving early will also tend to minimize long delays in heavy traffic, which can add stress for everyone.

*Update friends and family on your location and share basic medical information*

- Alert others (family, friends, and medical personnel) that you are changing locations, and give them your contact information. Update them regularly as you move.

## During an Evacuation

Even in the early stage of Alzheimer's, changes in routine, traveling and new environments may increase the risk for wandering and agitation. Caregivers must stay alert for unexpected reactions that may result from these changes.

*Share the individual's dementia diagnosis with others so that they can support you.*

- When appropriate, share the diagnosis with others, such as hotel or shelter staff, family members and airline attendants, so they can better assist.
- Try to stay together or with a group; it only takes a moment to get lost. Do not leave the person with dementia alone.
- Do your best to remain calm.

## Tips for Preventing Agitation

*Stay alert for unexpected reactions from your loved one.*

Be prepared for the person with dementia to experience some anxiety or confusion during an emergency. The following tips may help prevent agitation:

- Think of some ideas to help with anxiety, such as taking a walk together or engaging in simple tasks
- Redirect the person's attention if he or she becomes upset
- Move to a safer or quieter place, if possible. Limit stimulation
- Make sure the person is taking medications as scheduled
- Try to schedule regular meals and maintain the usual sleep schedule
- Avoid elaborate or detailed explanations.
- Follow brief explanations with reassurance
- Be prepared to provide additional assistance with all activities of daily living
- Pay attention to cues such as fidgeting and pacing, which may indicate that the person is overwhelmed

- Remind the person that he or she is in the right place

### **Helpful hints during an episode of agitation**

- Approach the person from the front and use his or her name
- Use calm, positive statements and a patient, low-pitched voice
- Respond to the emotions expressed rather than the words. For example, “You’re frightened and want to go home. It’s OK, I’m here with you”
- Don’t argue with or correct the person. Instead, affirm his or her experience, reassure and try to divert attention. For example, “The noise in this shelter is frightening. Let’s see if we can find a quieter spot and look at your photo book”

### Additional Resources

- If you need immediate assistance for an emergency situation, dial **911**
- Alzheimer’s Association 24/7 Helpline 936-1655 or 924-4170
- The Red Cross – 949-6785 or 916-3345 offers information about preparing for an emergency and where to find shelter and supplies in a disaster.
- The Humane Society - 949-1461 offers tips on how to keep pets safe in natural disasters and everyday emergencies
- Hazard Management - 945-4624
- National Emergency Operations Centre – 949-6555 (available after an activation)