



Alzheimer's Family Support Center
of Cape Cod

(508) 896-5170 • alzheimerscapecod.org

Until there's a cure, there's community.

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As of March 13, a Federal State of Emergency was declared. As you already know, COVID-19 pandemic poses a health risk for everyone. However, the risk to persons over age 60, persons with compromised immune systems, and those with underlying health conditions, including lung, kidney, cancers, heart disease, and progressive neurologic diseases are at highest risk for serious complications.

To keep you safe, the AFSC has suspended in-person support, education, cultural, and social supports for the time being. **However, the AFSC office remains open, and we have expanded our hours to include telephone support 7 days a week. We want to emphasize that the office is open for phone calls from 9 am to 5 pm. Messages are also being checked regularly. Primary caregivers over the age of 60, especially those with co-existing health conditions, need to have contingency plans in place, including at least one emergency contact, in the event that they become ill. If you do not already have a plan, and you need help in creating one, please call us at (508) 896-5170. If you experience respiratory symptoms, please contact your medical providers immediately.**

We also want you to know that you may be able to access grocery and pharmacy delivery in your area. Please contact us for the names of delivery providers serving your town on Cape Cod.

While you may already be taking steps to protect yourselves, and your loved ones, we can always do more to protect our most vulnerable friends, caregivers and neighbors during this pandemic.

Here are 11 recommendations for caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. **Older adults AND persons with compromised immune systems, or underlying health conditions should be limiting social contact right now.** "Social distancing" measures may put strain on families and friends who wish to have contact with their loved ones, but it is important that we think twice about those visiting right now. Phone calls, email and use of telecommunication applications such as Skype can be substituted until the pandemic slows.
2. **If there is a homemaker, home health aide nursing assistant or other respite provider coming to your home, this is NOT the time to discontinue their service.** Caregivers should anticipate that if they become ill, having these services in place will be crucial to caring for their loved one. However, it is important that no one comes into the home who is ill or may have had recent contact with someone who is ill.
3. **Caregivers need to have a solid "back-up" plan.** An un-well caregiver poses a particularly difficult situation, especially during this pandemic. Having a "back-up" contingency plan to care for a loved one is imperative. Back-up plans should include identifying who can "fill-in" if the caregiver becomes ill. Also, have a list of your current medications, health conditions and provider contacts readily available to who may be providing back-up.
4. **Limit visiting retail stores and restaurants right now.** You should already have should have enough food and medications in the house for at least 2 weeks. Consider mail ordering of

prescription medications and grocery delivery services. You could also ask a neighbor or friend to shop for you and drop off items that are needed immediately.

5. **If you are a caregiver with a loved one in assisted living, memory care, or other care facility, find out about their infection control procedures.** Most have infection control plans in place and you can ask to be notified about them. Taking a person out of a facility right now may NOT be the right decision. Instead, stay abreast of what is happening at the facility, and monitor the health of your loved one daily. If you are ill, postpone your visit. Facilities with confirmed cases of COVID-19 may not allow visitors for several weeks. Others are limiting visitors. Check with the facility's current policy.
6. **Ask your health care provider if it is OK to postpone annual check-ups or non-urgent medical appointments.** Health care providers may be very busy right now caring for those who are ill and if you and your loved one are otherwise feeling well, it may be OK to postpone medical appointments for a couple of months.
7. **Be careful of scams during this pandemic!** There are recent anecdotal stories about scammers calling households encouraging them to "get on a list" for COVID-19 vaccination and taking credit card numbers. Your local health department or health care provider is your best source for information about future vaccines or medical treatment options for COVID-19.
8. **If you are feeling anxious and your loved one has dementia, he or she will ALSO experience anxiety.** It is difficult enough for healthy persons to make sense of what is happening around this pandemic and it is even MORE difficult for persons with dementia. They already worry about the health and wellbeing to their caregiver. Turn off television news outlets, and go for walks, write letters together, listen to music, do a puzzle, or watch a funny movie. Let your loved one with dementia know frequently that you and he or she is "going to be OK." *NOTE: If you are a caregiver who is experiencing anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is recommended that you contact your health care provider and/or local support group organization (i.e. **Alzheimer's Family Support Center, (508) 896-5170**) for assistance. A free, national Disaster Distress Hotline can also be accessed 24/7 at 800-985-5990.*
9. **Remember to cough or sneeze into your elbow, wash your hands frequently or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 70% alcohol), and clean frequently used surfaces daily.** Remember, **cleaning** refers to the removal of germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces. . Most germs can be eliminated by using solution of 1/3 cup bleach to one gallon of water. Remember to ask visitors to wash their hands upon entering the home and when leaving.
10. **If you are feeling well, but believe that you OR your loved one had an exposure to a person with COVID-19, contact your health care provider's office by phone.** You should not go to the emergency room. Learn about symptoms to be watchful of including fever, general lethargy, aches, cough or shortness of breath. Ask your provider if you and your loved one should self-quarantine (remember...we quarantine the healthy, isolate the sick). **If you are feeling ill with above symptoms, contact your health care provider and follow their guidance.**
11. **Finally, it is vital that you are receiving accurate, up to date information and guidance during this pandemic.** Your best daily sources of information will come from the [Centers for Disease Control](#) or your State Department of Public Health.

Thank you, and please continue to take care of yourselves and each other.

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