

# Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS”

## The Plan of Care

A *Plan of Care* is a record of the care and treatment a person needs. The Plan helps you and anyone who assists you with caregiving tasks, especially when a patient leaves the hospital. The discharge planner provides the caregiver with a copy of the doctor's orders and a brief set of instructions for *medical* care to include in the Plan.

The Plan shows:

- diagnosis
- medications
- functional limitations
- a list of equipment needed
- specific diet
- detailed care instructions
- services the home health care agency provides

This information is presented in a specific order so that the process of care becomes repetitive and routine. When the Plan is kept up to date, it provides a clear record of events that is helpful both in solving and in avoiding problems. The Plan also keeps you from having to rely on your memory and allows another



person to take over respite care or take your place with a minimum of disruption.

## Making and Recording the Plan of Care

To record a Plan of Care, use a loose-leaf notebook. Put a copy of the doctor's instructions on the inside front cover. After using your Plan of Care for one week, make necessary adjustments and continue to do so as the person's needs change. Always adjust to what works for you and the person being cared for. Use notes, pictures, or whatever it takes to describe your responsibilities. Also, use black ink, not pencil, to maintain a permanent record.

### Patient Privacy

Be aware that because of HIPAA regulations, medical information is confidential. Professional caregivers must follow the guidelines of their agency when reporting.

### To Ensure You Are Heard

Be sure he has his hearing aid turned up.

- Stand, sit, or squat so you are at eye level with the person.
- Make sure your face is in the light so that your lips and facial expressions can be seen.
- Use simple sentences. For example, "Do you want your sweater?"
- Use body language such as nodding or pointing and lots of facial expressions.
- Speak in a normal tone, facing the person, and making eye contact. **Do not shout.**
- Do not rush or be impatient.



### Tips to Make Alzheimer's Sundowning Behaviors Less Likely

- Keep the person active in the morning and encourage a rest after lunch.
- Early-evening activities that are familiar from an earlier time in the person's life may be helpful, such as "paper work" for a former secretary or planting seeds for a gardener.
- Closing the curtains, having a pre-dinner non-alcoholic drink, or assisting with preparing dinner or setting the table may be helpful.
- Consider the effect of bright lights and noise from television and radios. Are these adding to the confusion and restlessness?
- Try not to arrange baths or showers for the late afternoon if these are upsetting activities. The exception may be the person who is calmed by a hot bath before bed.
- Some people find warm milk, a back rub, or music calming.
- Some may need medication. This will need to be discussed with the doctor.



### Sleep and Aging

A healthy person sleeps about 30 minutes less as he or she ages from 20 to 75. Sleep problems often do increase with age though. An older person has difficulty reaching the deeper stages of sleep and may be awakened frequently throughout the night.

The best thing to do is to keep on a regular sleep schedule. Help the person in your care to get some physical exercise, and to maintain a healthy diet. Be aware of medications that may be causing insomnia. A tape of soft music at bedtime might help. Be sure any emotionally upsetting topics are not discussed close to bedtime.

Source: *No More Sleepless Nights*, by Peter Haurin, Wiley & Sons

## Taking Care of Yourself—Gratitude

We all have times when we have conflicts with family and friends, feel we are not doing a good job and generally feel keyed-up. Take a few moments every day, preferably at a routine time, to write in a “gratitude” journal. You will feel better and be more optimistic. Refer to your gratitude list regularly. Express appreciation to someone every day.

## Carry Vital Medical Information

It is important to organize medical information so it is on a card and with the family caregiver when traveling with the person in your care. Include:

- Doctor’s name and phone number
- Pre-existing medical conditions; drug and food allergies
- Medical devices
- List of all medications, including supplements and herbs
- Past surgeries
- Insurance information

## Inspiration

Your eyes see what they are trained to see.

## Live Life Laughing!

Shouldn't you be writing some of this down?



## Don't Fall – Be Safe

Due to changes in the brain that are caused by Alzheimer’s disease, people with AD are at *especially* high risk of falling. Slower reaction time or difficulty recognizing changes in the height or depth of a step, for example, can lead to tripping and falling. Changes in balance and coordination combined with poor memory can make it difficult for a person with AD to get from one place to another *and* avoid hazardous objects at the same time.

To help the person in your care feel more confident, adaptive devices such as walkers or canes can be useful, but you will have to remind him to use these devices.

*The Comfort of Home*®

### **Our Purpose**

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

### **Ordering Info**

From the publishers of

*The Comfort of Home*®  
Caregiver Series

#### **available from...**

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## **SAFETY TIPS—Sundowning in Alzheimer's**

People with Alzheimer's disease may become more confused, restless, or insecure late in the afternoon or early evening, when the sun is going down. It can be worse after a move or a change in their routine. They may become suspicious or see and hear things that are not there. Some other possible causes—

- an upset in the “internal body clock,” causing a biological mix-up between day and night
- less need for sleep, which is common among older adults
- the person can't see well in dim light and becomes confused
- the person gets tired at the end of the day and is less able to cope with stress
- the person is involved in activities all day long and grows restless if there's nothing to do in the late afternoon or evening
- the caregiver communicates fatigue and stress to the person and he becomes anxious

NEXT ISSUE...GOOD NUTRITION ON A BUDGET