

How to talk about moving to residential care

Many people living with dementia will need to move into a residential care home at some point.

For people with dementia, a move to aged care is often the result of a crisis or major health issue. The decision to move may be rushed or unplanned. You may need to take the first place available, and this may not be in your preferred facility. For these reasons, it is important to start conversations around future aged care early and have them often. This will help to normalise the conversation around aged care but more importantly will help you to find out what the person wants for their future, while they can still tell you about it.

A person with dementia should always be involved in the process of deciding about their future living arrangements.

How do you start a conversation about moving to aged care?

Plant the seed

Ask questions around where the person would like to live when they are older, when they might need some assistance.

Comment on all the available options now

Talk about having help at home, moving to an independent living village or how aged care has come a long way since their parent's days.

Focus on the positives of a move

- » No longer being responsible for maintaining the home or completing daily chores
- » Opportunities to socialise, meet new people and make friends, take part in activities they otherwise might not get a chance to
- » You could also emphasise the safety aspect, especially if the person is currently living alone.

Find out as much as you can about the person's preferences now

This information will help to build a picture of the right care for your loved one, and will be useful if they are unable to communicate their wishes.

It can be useful to know or ask:

- » Does the person prefer to bathe or shower, every day or less often?
- » Do they like people touching their head or washing their hair?
- » Do they like to be well groomed with makeup and jewelry on?
- » Do they have certain items they would want in their room?
- » What kind of daily or weekly activities do they enjoy now, or did they enjoy when they were younger? Would they like to be involved in regular daily activities or prefer to have places for quiet contemplation?

- » Would they prefer taking part in activities with a large group or with only one or two other people?
- » What kind of music do they like?
- » Do they prefer a private or a shared room?
- » Is it important to have food freshly prepared on site or brought in and re-heated?
- » Would they prefer to eat meals in a dining room, in small intimate groups or alone in their room?

Visit a few facilities with the person. While visiting, ask what they liked and didn't like.

Be prepared for resistance

It is normal for anyone to feel apprehensive about moving home. It can be even more unsettling for a person with dementia.

- » The person may feel confused, frightened and disempowered by the idea of a move
- » The person may have issues around privacy, or feel discomfort around strangers
- » They may have reservations about the cost
- » They may fear losing their freedom
- » They may not be aware of their limitations and be adamant they are staying at home.

If the person is resistant to the idea of a move, yet it has become necessary, seek the help of a professional they trust. Your loved one may be more inclined to be guided by their GP or pastor. You could also ask for recommendations from friends and family members.