

# HOSPITAL VISITS ARE TOUGH WITH DEMENTIA — A NURSE SHARES 5 TIPS TO MAKE IT A LITTLE EASIER



How can I make the hospital visit less stressful for you both?

BY JANE UNWIN

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## TIP: Number 1

On the same day that you are taking your relative follow this tip



*important tip*

Explain the situation  
clearly and repeatedly

Use simple, calm language to explain what's happening:

"We're going to the hospital so the doctor can help you feel better."

Repeat it as often as needed, and avoid complex details that might overwhelm them. Answer any questions with simple statements, such as 'the doctor needs to check on your heart as you get older.'

Don't ask them if they remember any health issues or symptoms. Allow them to say this if their memory is jogged by your words.

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## TIP: Number 2

*important tip*

Take familiar items



Knowing that they have what they might require will keep them calmer

Ensure that usual items, such as glasses, phone and bags, are taken to the hospital. People with dementia get very distressed when they can't find their familiar items. Phones can also help to pass time, for example, by looking at photos

Comfortable clothes will prevent distraction or discomfort. Ensure that the clothes are suitable for hot or cold areas. Corridors in hospitals can be draughty but some rooms are hot. Think layers that can be taken off or put on.

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## TIP: Number 3



*important tip*

### Take medication



Take packets of medication or a repeat prescription sheet.

If the tablets have been dispensed into a dosette box by your relative then leave this at home. Hospital staff aren't able to give patients unlabelled medication. They are unable to dispense from pharmacy issued dosette boxes either.

The nurses need to read the box and strip that the medication is sealed in. The doctors will review the tablets any patient is on related to their condition. They will prescribe previous and new medication as relevant. The hospital pharmacist will issue new medication once prescribed by the doctor.

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## TIP: Number 4

Take any documents that are going to be important when decisions about treatment are being discussed.

These may include Lasting Power Of Attorney for Health and Care, Advanced Directives or decisions about resuscitation.

These are legal documents and hospital staff have to see them. They can't go on word alone.



**Lasting power  
of attorney**



**Health and care  
decisions**

*important tip*

Important documents



## TIP: Number 5



*important tip*

Allow your relative time to talk

## When to speak and when not to speak?

When your relative is talking to a member of the hospital team, allow time for them to respond themselves.

They will look at you for help if they need it but often the hospital staff member will be assessing their level of understanding.

Also, having other people talking can confuse them more and distract from the original question.

Look for cues from the staff about when you should step in to help

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"Don't be afraid to ask for help;  
you're not alone in this journey".

Jane is a nurse with more than 30 years of experience working for the NHS and also provides training for staff who work in a care home setting.

She has first hand knowledge of caring for someone with dementia as her mum has been living with the condition for 4 years



My mother is still the same person I have known all my life. She lives with Alzheimer's. Her brain sends her the wrong signal quite often. So its up to me to let her use my brain when necessary.

Bob DeMarco

*Thank you!*

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