

Tips for Relating to Memory Care Residents during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Acknowledgement: Dr. Helen Kales. UC Davis, for her guidance

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Rationale

- Facilities with Memory Care units have more COVID-19 outbreaks with more residents involved
- Each person in Memory Care requires an individualized approach
- During the pandemic, many staff members caring for residents with varying degrees of memory loss may not have been trained specifically for this population
- Teaching staff how to help residents improve source control and spatial distancing is an important component of an **infection control plan** for Memory Care units
- New information that masks also protect the wearer

What does the world of COVID-19 look like to people with dementia?

- They may be unaware of current events or have forgotten what they have been told
- They are wondering why they do not have visitors
- They miss seeing the smiles and laughter of their caregivers who are wearing masks and other forms of PPE
- They wonder why their caregivers are so tense and often sad

COVID-19 and Memory Care Units Reference Sheet



California Department of Public Health COVID-19 and Memory Care Units Reference Sheet



Background

Many COVID-19 prevention and mitigation strategies are difficult to implement in the memory care setting. Consult with the HAI Program as needed.

Managing Memory Care Residents with Behavioral Techniques

- Use white boards, signs, reminders for *why* it is important to wear a mask
- Activities to reduce wandering, for example

individual assessment by trained psychologist

- Important to identify the triggers and time of day when undesirable behaviors occur
- Know the person: each person may need individualized interventions
 - Put yourself in the person's shoes
 - Try to understand their surroundings from their perspective
 - How would you feel?

- [HAI Program's COVID-19 and Memory Care Units Reference Sheet \(PDF\)](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/HAI/CDPH%20Document%20Library/ReferenceSheet_COVIDandMemoryCareFINAL_Oct2020.pdf)

(https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/HAI/CDPH%20Document%20Library/ReferenceSheet_COVIDandMemoryCareFINAL_Oct2020.pdf)

- [SNF Detecting and Controlling Outbreaks webpage](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/HAI/Pages/SNF_DetectAndControlOutbreaks.aspx)

(https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/HAI/Pages/SNF_DetectAndControlOutbreaks.aspx)

- [LHD Resources and Training webpage](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/HAI/Pages/LHD_Resources_and Trainings.aspx)

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Groups of actions to consider

- Manage memory care residents with behavioral techniques (signs, activities, anticipate behaviors)
- Provide individualized attention during COVID-19
- Use creative solutions to facilitate mask wearing and to maintain social distancing
- Provide reasonable exceptions for a resident with dementia to not wear a face covering
- Emphasize other infection control measures, such as hand hygiene, environmental cleaning and disinfection
- Managing Stress Among Staff

Creative solutions to mask wearing

- ***Do they simply forget why a mask is needed?***
 - Consider a sign by the door for when you go out. You may need to gently remind the person we're still in a pandemic.
- ***Does the mask fit comfortably?***
 - Try different styles or looser fastenings if it's too tight.
- ***Are they unhappy with the feel of the fabric?***
 - Try different materials, maybe one made from a familiar garment (check with them first before cutting the fabric)
- ***Are they anxious it will stop them from breathing?***
 - Offer reassurance and show them that it won't

Creative solutions to mask wearing a mask, cont'd

- ***Is there a past experience that might make them fearful about wearing a mask (perhaps as a young child in the war)?***
 - Talk to them about it and try to find ways to reassure them.
- ***Do they pull the mask down?***
 - Try some distraction or positive reinforcement; describe how wearing a face covering helps to stop the spread of COVID-19 and keep people well.

Creative solutions to mask wearing, continued

- ***Is the mask unappealing?***

- Try using masks with themes that would appeal to individuals, such as a sports team, hobby, color, animals, flowers, holidays



- ***Are they lip readers?***

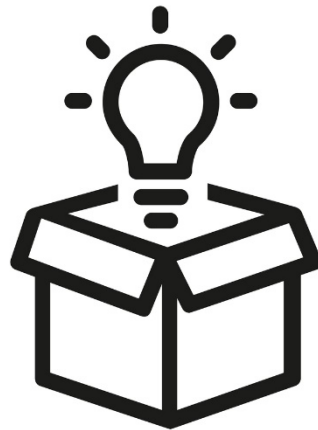
- Clear masks* may be an option
- Face Shields without masks do not provide as much protection as masks



*ASTM Level 1 surgical mask, fog-resistant (www.safenclear.com)

Surgical mask, fog-resistant meets ASTM level 3 standards for fluid resistance and flammability (www.theclearmask.com/product)

**Be creative with the individual
and with the environment!**



Questions?

For more information,
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