

# SeniorsNL

RESOURCES • INFORMATION • CONNECTION

## Caregiver Information Series

### Conditions that Mimic Dementia Respite Care Hospitalization

2023

# Conditions that Mimic Dementia

There are a number of conditions, situations, and medication side effects that can mimic the symptoms of dementia. If you are concerned about your care receiver, read below and follow up with a medical professional to determine what is really happening.

## 1. Urinary tract infection (UTI)

UTIs among seniors are common, and they are more likely to have a symptom that is not related to pain. More common symptoms of a UTI can include confusion, behaviour change, falls, hallucinations, and/or being unusually sleepy.

## 2. Medications

Common prescriptions and over-the-counter medications may have side effects that can cause dementia-like symptoms or worsen existing dementia symptoms. It is best to discuss these symptoms with the doctor who prescribed the medication in the event that the senior is being treated for the wrong illness. You can also talk with a pharmacist on how the medication might impact other medications the patient might be taking.

## 3. Hospitalization-induced Delirium

Delirium is a sudden change in a person's mental state. It is very common during hospitalization and can affect up to half of older patients. It is also strongly associated with worse health outcomes. It tends to happen due to a mix of triggers (illness, pain, medication side-effects) and risk factors (dementia, or pre-dementia). Hospitalization-induced delirium can be missed by hospital staff.

## 4. Vitamin deficiency

A vitamin deficiency can cause symptoms that are like dementia. The most common is a B12 vitamin deficiency which causes cognitive impairment. Other B vitamin deficiencies can cause dementia symptoms, especially if alcohol is consumed.

## 5. Normal pressure hydrocephalus (NPH)

This happens when there is a buildup of spinal fluid in the brain due to an accident or a fall. It can cause cognitive impairment such as difficulty walking, problems with thinking, and loss of bladder control. The sooner the fluid gets drained, the more likely the person will regain their cognitive functions.

## 6. Depression

Depression can be caused by a variety of different factors including biological, psychological, and/or physical. Some of the symptoms include extreme guilt, thoughts of dying, and hopelessness for the future. Seniors can be more at

home, in an adult day center, and/or in existing senior care environments. **Do not deny yourself respite, especially if you are the only caregiver.**

**Note: to get respite care, you do need to contact community supports in your area(if not already connected). Contact information is listed later in this section. And you may also qualify to have some, or all the cost covered.**

### **In-home respite care:**

In-home respite care is one of the most adaptable forms of respite care. It has flexible hours. Each person's needs are cared for. These services can include:

- Cooking meals
- Housecleaning, and
- More

This care is usually done by home support. Contact SeniorsNL for more details about it.

### **Adult daycare:**

Adult daycare centres run during business hours. It is for any caregivers, but many do have jobs as well as caring. The person you care for will receive good care, good socialization and meals and you can truly relax because they know their loved one is safe and being well looked after. You can decide how many days you wish to have. However, this may not be an option where you live. Contact SeniorsNL for more information.

### **Respite in Senior Care environments:**

A caregiver looking for a longer break may see a personal care home as a good choice. Some personal care homes may offer short-term stays. It could also give you an idea of how your care receiver would find staying at a senior home if they can no longer be cared for at home. They may be more open to the idea after a short-term stay in a personal care home already.

### **Family and friends:**

A caregiver may choose to ask their family or friends for help. Your family and friends may not be well-trained in providing care, so you should be clear on what you're asking from them.

### **Virtual respite:**

Caregiving can be a lonely experience. Your friends and family may not realize what you are currently going through. In this case, it might be good to take up virtual respite through online chat rooms and talk to a caregiver like yourself. Facebook is a great place to find a number of groups. You can also find groups by just searching for virtual support groups for caregivers. Wherever it is in the world, you all have something in common.

### **What to do when picking a respite provider:**

- Screen and interview candidates to get a feel if they would mesh well with your care receiver
- Ask for and check references
- Conduct a criminal background check
- Consider the cost of the respite care within your budget, and
- Ask the respite provider how to provide certain kinds of care. An example of this would be to ask how they would help a person get out of bed if they needed help to do so.

### **Where to find respite care in Newfoundland?**

Community Supports Program (Central Health): 1-833-210-8491 (St. John's and surrounding areas) 709-466-5706 (Burin and Bonavista Peninsulas) 709-786-5217 (Rural Avalon)

<https://www.centralhealth.nl.ca/community-support-residential-servi>

Community Supports Program (Eastern Health): 709-752-4835

<https://lhc.easternhealth.ca/about-us/contact-information>

Community Supports Program (Labrador-Grenfell Health): 1-833-284-4751

<https://www.lghealth.ca/your-health/programs-and-services/therapeutic-intervention-and-rehabilitation-services/>

Community Supports Program (Western Health): 709-634-5551

<https://westernhealth.nl.ca/home/health-topics-main/community-support/>

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## **Hospitalization**

Hospitalization can be a stressful situation for both you and the person in your care. But, if you build relationships with doctors and nurses and lean on people in times of need the hospitalization process may be easier.

Hopefully, you will have advance notice. But sometimes hospitalization can happen quickly. You will need to prepare for both.

### **Getting organized:**

If you have kept a care book, you will have all the information you need in case of a quick admission to the hospital.

**Get as much information as you can** about what is going to happen. Write everything down. It keeps you focused and you won't have to remember what was said. **Do not worry about asking too many questions** and asking to repeat the answers. You want to feel comfortable with what is happening and what you can do to make things easier.

**Also, ask about discharge and what needs to happen** after your loved one goes home. Ask about follow-up appointment, the need for home support ( say yes if they ask if you want it), equipment that may be needed ( walker, cane, bedpan, etc) and where to get, a visit from the public health nurse, what care is needed to help your loved one recover and if you need to learn the procedures( do not leave without learning). Write everything down and make sure you understand everything. **Do not leave the hospital until you fully understand what to do and who to contact should something happens.**

### **Building a care team:**

Caregiving does not have to be a solo job, and it can make it easier if you have other people to help you along the way. If you have family or other people that look in on the person in your care, it can give you some respite time and share the responsibilities when the person is home. offer a time that works best for the person in your care.

### **Building trust with doctors and nurses:**

You might have the most intimate relationship with the person in your care and know what works and what doesn't. Doctors and nurses would appreciate any insight you have. Share any notes and information that you think they need to know.

### **Waiting for results:**

As a caregiver, it can be difficult waiting for details on the condition of the person that you care for. It is best to be firm yet fair to the doctors and nurses when it comes to getting answers. You need to know about the person in your care, but It may take time for medical people to complete their assessment of what the person in your care needs. **Ask when you can expect results and if you do not hear back by that time, call.**

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**Disclaimer: This brochure is for information only, Reach out to a health care professional and/or pharmacist to talk about your concerns.**

For more information, please contact us or visit our website at:

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