



CARING FOR SOMEONE WITH DEMENTIA



Fernlea
Caring Flexible Respite



SUPPORTING SOMEONE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

Understanding Dementia

Dementia affects memory, thinking, behaviour, communication, and daily functioning. It is progressive, and each person's experience is unique. Symptoms may include forgetfulness, confusion, difficulty following conversations, mood changes, and reduced ability to manage daily tasks. Dementia is caused by changes in the brain, not deliberate behaviour.



Aligning Care to the Person's Needs

Care should be personalised and responsive to the person's abilities, preferences, and stage of dementia. Knowing the person's life story, routines, cultural background, and preferences helps guide supportive care. Breaking tasks into simple steps, offering cues, and allowing extra time supports independence. Sudden changes in behaviour, mobility, appetite, or sleep should be reviewed by a health professional.

Best Practice Activities

Meaningful activity supports wellbeing and reduces behavioural symptoms. Everyday tasks such as folding towels, sorting items, or gardening can be calming and familiar. Cognitive and sensory activities include reminiscence, puzzles, music, and sensory objects. Physical activities such as walking, stretching, or chairbased exercises support mobility and mood. Social connection through small groups or community programs helps reduce isolation.

Fernlea Community House Programs

Fernlea's Community House in Emerald provides inclusive, small group activities that support social connection, creativity and wellbeing.

MANAGING DISTRESS, RESISTANCE AND UNSAFE BEHAVIOUR

People living with dementia may become distressed, resist care, or act in ways that feel aggressive or unsafe. These behaviours often reflect fear, confusion, pain, or sensory overload.

Understanding the Causes

Triggers may include pain, infection, constipation, fatigue, hunger, overstimulation, confusion, or loss of control. Sudden or severe changes should be discussed with a GP or health professional.

Responding to Strong Resistance

Pausing and giving space can help reduce distress. Acknowledging feelings (“I can see this is upsetting”) helps the person feel understood. Breaking tasks into smaller steps, offering simple choices, or redirecting with music or familiar objects can reduce resistance. If the task is not urgent, trying again later is often effective.

Responding to Aggression or Unsafe Behaviour

Safety is the priority. Staying calm, speaking softly, and stepping back to give physical space can reduce escalation. Avoid arguing or reasoning, and remove triggers such as noise or bright lights. Reassure the person (“You’re safe. I’m here to help”) and move out of reach if needed.

Preventing Escalation

Predictable routines, calm environments, and regular meals, hydration, rest, and comfort help prevent distress. Monitoring for pain or illness and providing meaningful daily activities reduce frustration and boredom.

What Not to Do

Avoid arguing or correcting harshly, overloading with choices, or speaking as though the person is not present. Do not ignore sudden changes in health or behaviour. Restraints should not be used unless clinically directed.

When to Seek Help

Seek professional support when behaviour becomes unsafe, changes suddenly, or becomes overwhelming for the carer. Fernlea’s respite services, GPs, memory clinics, and specialist dementia services can assist.



Looking After Yourself as a Carer

Carer wellbeing is essential. Taking breaks, accepting help, maintaining personal health appointments, and connecting with support groups help sustain longterm care. Learning about respite options early helps prevent exhaustion.

Fernlea Respite Services

Fernlea provides day respite in Emerald and Pakenham, offering personalised, smallgroup support for people with dementia and lifelimiting illnesses.

Creating a Dementia Friendly Environment

Support independence and safety through clear signage, good lighting, safe outdoor spaces, and minimising clutter and noise. Familiar objects and photos help maintain identity and comfort.

Planning Ahead

Planning reduces stress and ensures wishes are respected. Key areas include advance care directives, powers of attorney, home safety assessments, future respite or residential care options, and financial and legal planning.

Emergency and Crisis Support

Contact your GP or afterhours medical service for urgent concerns. Call 000 for immediate danger or medical emergencies. Local hospital emergency departments can assist with acute issues.

Where to seek help

National Support

Dementia Australia provides information, counselling, and education. Dementia Support Australia offers 24hour support for changed behaviours. The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and OPAN provide rights information and advocacy.

Victorian Services

Health.vic dementia services offer home help, respite, social programs, and guidance. Local councils provide homecare services, respite, and carer events.

Local Supports (Emerald and Surrounds)

Fernlea Community Care provides day respite, inhome care, and Community House programs. Local GPs and memory clinics support assessment and care planning. Neighbourhood houses in Emerald, Cockatoo, and Gembrook offer social groups and carerfriendly activities. Aged-care providers in Berwick and surrounds offer respite and residential care. Palliative care services support later-stage dementia.



QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

CHECKLIST

- Maintain routines and simplify tasks.
- Use reassurance, not correction.
- Keep environments calm, safe, and familiar.
- Engage in meaningful activities daily.
- Monitor for sudden changes.
- Take breaks and use respite services.
- Reach out for help early.

DAILY SUPPORT

- Break tasks into small steps and allow extra time.
- Offer one or two simple choices.
- Use reassurance instead of correction.
- Encourage independence where safe.

PREVENTING ESCALATION

- Maintain predictable routines.
- Keep environments calm and uncluttered.
- Ensure regular meals, hydration, rest, and comfort.
- Monitor for pain or illness.
- Provide meaningful daily activities.

CORE PRINCIPLES

Dementia affects memory, thinking, behaviour, and communication. Behaviours often reflect unmet needs rather than intentional actions. Calm routines, simple language, and familiar environments reduce distress and support cooperation.

MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES

- Folding towels, sorting items, gardening.
- Music, reminiscence, sensory objects.
- Short walks, stretching, chairbased exercises.
- Social connection through small groups or community programs.

MANAGING DISTRESS OR RESISTANCE

- Pause and give space.
- Acknowledge feelings: “I can see this is upsetting.”
- Redirect with music, a familiar object, or a different activity.
- Try again later if the task is not urgent.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

RESPONDING TO AGGRESSION OR UNSAFE BEHAVIOUR

- Stay calm and speak softly.
- Step back to give physical space.
- Avoid arguing or reasoning.
- Reduce triggers such as noise or bright lights.
- Reassure: “You’re safe. I’m here to help.”
- Move out of reach if needed.

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Do not argue or correct harshly.
- Do not overload with choices.
- Do not speak as though the person is not present.
- Do not ignore sudden changes in health or behaviour.

FERNLEA SUPPORT

Fernlea provides day respite in Emerald and Pakenham, and Community House programs offering social connection and activities.

CARER WELLBEING

- Take breaks and accept help.
- Maintain your own health appointments.
- Connect with carer support groups.
- Use respite services early.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

- Behaviour becomes unsafe or overwhelming.
- Sudden or severe changes in behaviour.
- Concerns about pain, infection, or delirium.

LOCAL AND STATEWIDE SUPPORT (VICTORIA)

Dementia Australia

Website - www.dementia.org.au

Phone - 1800 100 500

Health Victoria - Department of Health

Website - www.health.vic.edu.au

Phone - 1300 650 272

Fernlea Community House, Emerald

Address - 356-358 Belgrave - Gembrook Road, Emerald

Phone - 5968 3895

Cockatoo Community House

Address - Unit 1/79 Pakenham Rd, Cockatoo

Phone - 5968 9031

Record your local GP phone number and other important contacts here:

Gembrook Community Centre

Address - 1 Beenak East Rd. Gembrook Victoria 3783.

Phone -0429 921 051

Website -

www.gembrookcommunitycentre.com.au

Emergency Contacts

000 for immediate danger or medical emergencies.

Local hospital emergency departments.

GP or afterhours medical service.



FERNLEA COMMUNITY CARE CONTACTS



Fernlea Community House

Address - 356-358 Belgrave-Gembrook Road, Emerald

Phone - 5968 3895

Mobile - 0424 147 364

Email - fch@fernlea.com.au

Website - www.fch.org.au

Fernlea Day Respite - Emerald

Address - 149 Emerald-Monbulk Road, Emerald

Phone - 5968 3895

Email - info@fernlea.com.au

Fernlea Day Respite - Pakenham

Address - 1 Main Street, Pakenham

Phone - 5968 3895

Email - info@fernlea.com.au

www.fernlea.com.au

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