

Dementia-care by friends and family

INFORMATION SHEET FROM THE SWEDISH DEMENTIA CENTRE

Anhörigvård och demens • faktablad på engelska

The help of friends and family is invaluable

There are at present approximately 150 000 people in Sweden with a dementia illness. The number is increasing as the population ages. Several professional groups are involved in health care but without the efforts of friends and family the initiatives of these professional groups would be fruitless.

Teamwork in everyday life

Dementia involves a gradual loss of memory, language, perception of time and several other important abilities. An individual with Alzheimer's can often cope with everyday life at the onset of the disease. Friends and family can help an individual with a dementia illness by being "one step ahead" and facilitating stages in everyday life.

There are also means of assistance which can partly compensate for the difficulties the illness causes.

It is common to feel inadequate

Gradually the situation for friends and family becomes more demanding, both mentally and physically. Life is often described as both meaningful and strenuous at the same time. Many friends and family feel anxiety, a sense of inadequacy and guilt. Sleep deprivation is common. Socialising with relatives and friends often becomes difficult.

Do not neglect your own health

Research shows that the health of friends and family is often at risk. It is therefore important to think about your own health, rather than just the health of the individual with the illness. You can benefit from support and as a friend or a family member it is important to know who to contact.

Various types of support

In accordance with the Social Services Act, municipalities are required to provide support for individuals who assist or care for a person with a dementia illness. Home help service and other aid which is granted to the individual with the illness may also serve as a relief for the friend or family member.

The range of initiatives varies between the different municipalities. Common examples include:

- Daytime activities
- Home help service and assistance in the home
- Consultation and training
- Temporary accommodation
- Discussion groups
- Technical means of assistance
- Meeting venues for friends and family



For further information on the assistance which is available in your municipality, you can contact the aid official, district nurse or family counsellor.

You are not alone

Many friends and family members of persons with a dementia illness also contact the Dementia Association, Alzheimerföreningen (the Alzheimer's Association) and Anhörigas Riksförbund (the National Association for Friends and Family) – it is possible to receive advice and support and the opportunity to share experiences with persons in similar situations through their local groups. They also organise lectures, workshops and excursions.

Dementia Association, tel: 08-658 99 20, website: www.demensforbundet.se

Alzheimerföreningen (the Alzheimer's Association), tel: 046-1473 18, website: www.alzheimerforeningen.se

Anhörigas Riksförbund (the National Association for Friends and Family), tel: 0474-40 400, website: www.ahrirsveterige.se

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Additional information sheets in different languages are available on the Swedish Dementia Centre's website: www.demenscentrum.se/Faktablad



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The Swedish Dementia Centre, Gavlegatan 16, 113 30 Stockholm, 08 - 690 58 00, info@demenscentrum.se

www.demenscentrum.se