

# How to stay active at home when you can't go out due to COVID-19 or other illnesses

In the coming weeks and months, it is very likely that older Australians will be advised to stay at home to reduce the chance of becoming unwell.

If you are looking after a person with dementia, who doesn't understand why their usual routines are being disrupted, it could be an especially challenging time for both them and you.

Like all of us, people living with dementia can experience frustration and anxiety when they are bored. Therefore, it is important to think about activities you can do at home to keep them feeling engaged, occupied and valued.

Below is a list of ideas to help you during this time. The purpose is to keep them active and help them feel useful, it is not about completing a task.

You know the person better than anyone else so the list is of suggestions that you can change to suit the person with dementia's likes and ability. Choose things you think that they'll enjoy.

## Outdoor Activities

**We know that getting outside is important to keep healthy and improve mood. Try and have at least 30 minutes outside each day.**

- Take a short walk, take your dog if you have one. If you see people you know on the street, keep your distance and only chat for a minute or two
- Spend time in the garden. You can do some tasks like water the garden, sweep the paths, weed the garden, prune the plants
- Help with hanging out the washing
- Go and get the mail
- Sit in the garden and point out what is happening outside, birds, cars, aeroplanes, trees
- Cook a BBQ and eat it outside
- Clean the car
- Tidy the shed



## Indoor Activities

There are many activities you can do inside that can help with keeping active and relieve stress and boredom. Chose an activity that the person with dementia will find interesting.

- Watch an exercise video. If you have access to the internet you can look at YouTube on your computer, tablet or TV for free exercises
- Do an activity that involves movement – clean the windows, vacuum, dust, clean out a cupboard, sweep the kitchen floor, do the dishes and put them away, or wash and fold the clothes
- Ask for help with simple cooking and baking tasks
- Dance, Listen and sing along to meaningful tunes on the radio or a favourite CD. If you have a computer or tablet, create a playlist of favourite tunes on YouTube or Spotify, or ask someone like a family member to do this for you
- Watch a favourite film or an episode of a TV series like Dancing with the Stars, Better Homes and Gardens, The Great Australian Bake Off. If you have a streaming service, there is a huge choice of things to watch depending on the persons taste.
- If you have a mobile device, talk to your family or friends via video using something like WhatsApp, FaceBook, FaceTime
- Look at photos - sort them into themes. Create a memory room with photos if you have a spare room or create a photobook together
- Watch favourite sporting moments e.g. the football, cricket, the races
- Do some craft work, colouring, drawing
- Think about old hobbies the person used to do. For example, if they were a knitter but can't knit any more, undo an old knitted garment and create a ball of wool
- Use the internet to research information about important places and things from the past e.g. where they lived as a child, what their parents did for a living



This helpsheet has been adapted from the resource "Helping someone with dementia stay active at home- if you can't go out due to Coronavirus" produced by Dignity in Dementia. ([www.dignityindementia.org](http://www.dignityindementia.org))

Dementia Support Australia (DSA) is a free nationwide service for people living with dementia and their carers. Accredited consultants provide advice and recommendations to people who care for someone with dementia whose behaviours are a risk to themselves or others.

DSA offers support **24 hours a day, 365 days a year throughout Australia.**

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