

## Caregiver Corner

**Q:** My mother has Alzheimer's and my father is her primary caregiver and power of attorney. My mother always took care of the bills with very little help from my dad.

However, she is starting to misplace mail, especially bills, and miss payments. What can I do?

**A:** This is a challenge that many families face at some point in the disease process. Here are some tips that may help now and as things progress:

- See if your mom would be willing to do the bills with your father. They can discuss what bills they will pay. Dad writes the check and Mom signs them.
- Have a central location such as a basket or bin for mail. Label the basket so your mother knows where to put the mail if she should retrieve it. Your parents can go through the mail together each night and put all bills in a safe place like a lock box until they can be paid.
- Consider setting up an auto bill pay system where bills are deducted directly from an account. Another option is to have all bills go to a post office box so they can't be misplaced. All other mail can be sent to the house as usual.

For additional suggestions or information, contact the Alzheimer's Association 24-hour Helpline at (800) 272-3900.

# Respite care is essential in the caregiver toolbox

Respite care is an essential tool for Alzheimer's caregivers. It offers a temporary rest from caregiving responsibilities while ensuring that your loved one continues to receive care in a secure environment.

It allows caregivers a chance to relax, to spend time with other family and friends, to run errands or to address their own health care needs. And in cases of emergency or unplanned situations, it can provide a safe and supportive care alternative.

"Caregivers want the best possible care for a loved one in a safe and reliable day respite program that offers positive stimulation," says Keith Harrington, director of programs and services for the Chapter.

The Rochester and Finger Lakes region has a number of respite services that assist individuals with dementia. They include Unity Adult Day Services, Generations Elder Care, SeniorsFirst Day and Respite Services, Home and Heart, Lifespan Adult Day Services and Caring House at Grande Vie.

Day programs such as these offer meals and a variety of activities such as exercise, games and music therapy. They also offer opportunities for participants just to socialize with one another.

The newest local respite resource is Marian's House, a day retreat for people with early to mid-stage Alzheimer's and other dementias in a residential setting. Operated by Jewish Senior Life, Marian's House offers meals, activities, supervision and specialized programming.

Mary Fazio, the live-in program manager for Marian's House, is a registered nurse with extensive experience in geriatric care who has been certified for dementia care.

Fazio says respite care can be just as valuable for the person with dementia as it is for their caregivers.

Marian's House, located in Brighton,



The design of Marian's House allows guests to socialize and participate in preparing meals.

is designed specifically for people with dementia. It features an open design with plenty of natural light, a secure outdoor area to allow guests time outside and rooms to allow them quiet time.

"It's a very calming environment," Fazio says. "And it's designed for socialization."

Socialization is important for people with dementia, Harrington says.

"There is a tendency for individuals with this disease to become socially isolated," he says.

Social day programs offer an alternative environment to home and the opportunity to interact with others who are facing the similar challenges.

"Individuals with dementia need encouragement to remain physically, emotionally and socially active," Harrington says. "The activities at day programs can offer a sense of normalcy for them."

### To learn more

- Check out [alz.org/care](http://alz.org/care) to learn about how respite can benefit you and your loved one.
- Call (800) 272-3900 to learn about local respite resources or to arrange for respite care.