

# Routines and Activities

As with any relationship, it is easy for caregivers and care recipients to fall into a routine. There are the daily things to worry about—the medications to be taken, the baths to be given, the cleaning to be done, the meals to be prepared. Whether or not you are solely responsible for all of these activities, you are probably responsible for making sure that everything gets done, and also for establishing the routine that allows them to get done.

Routines aren't bad things. They give a sense of predictability and reliability to the care recipient; for patients with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, routines can even be vital to maintaining a sense of self, place and purpose. For the caregiver, routines can provide a sense of structure and predictability to what otherwise might be a chaotic, overwhelming situation. Routines let the caregiver know when they are needed, and when they might be able to take a break. Use a master calendar, charting daily and monthly routines.

Here are some of the things to take into account as you establish a routine:

## MEDICATIONS



Medications have their own specific schedule; know your care recipient's medications, when they must be taken, how often and whether or not they are to be taken with meals.

## MEALS



Try to schedule meals at regular times each day. This is helpful emotionally; it helps to know when you will be eating. It can also be physically desirable, since the body regulates itself according to when food is eaten.

## BATHS



Decide whether baths or showers are to be given daily, or several times a week. Decide also whether they will be in the morning or evening. This will help to determine the daily and weekly schedule.

## CLEANING



How often does the house or apartment need to be cleaned, and who will do it? Some cleaning chores are daily—such as those in the kitchen or bathroom. Others, like mopping and laundry, need to be done weekly. Still others, like window washing and wall washing, only need to be done every several months. Make a list of cleaning chores that need to be done, scheduling how often they should be done. Determine which time of day, which day or which month each will be done.

## APPOINTMENTS



A schedule of tasks to be done in the house will help determine the schedule of appointments. Appointments with doctors, hairdressers, attorneys and insurance agents will all partly be determined by the availability of the professional, but they can and should fit in also with the schedule at home.

## LEISURE ACTIVITIES



Remember, when making a schedule, allow free time for leisure activities—for both you and your care recipient. Reading, talking, walking and engaging in hobbies are valuable parts of a person's life. And planning time in the daily schedule for these activities can do much to ensure a person's health and well-being.