



# The **MASE** Monthly Newsletter

## February 2015



Winners of Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

### Snowdrops — strong and graceful



January certainly has been a changeable month, with wind, rain and snow. Occasionally the sun shone through and the skies were blue, lulling us into a false sense of security. Then again came the wind and the snow just to confirm to us that we were indeed in the first month of the year. However, how lovely it is to see the little snowdrops peeping through the snow, showing their strength and determination to survive, despite the cold weather.

When Caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's, Carers must remember to make their own physical, mental and emotional health a priority. New Carers should be aware that a loved one's health and well-being is strongly linked to their Carers own health and well-being.

We equate the strength and determination of the snowdrops to that of all the wonderful Carers, who carry on day in, day out, and who continue to push through the barriers of everyday life when dealing with Dementia/Alzheimer's. **You are very special people** - be kind to yourselves, praise yourself for how you are coping, and please remember to ask for help when needed!

### Keep a list of your Medication with you at all time

It is really important that we all keep track of our medicines by keeping a complete, up-to-date list of all medicines you have been prescribed. A simple list with the name of the medication, the dosage and the time taken each day. Also note down if you have any allergies. Keep this list in your wallet or purse and always remember to update it if your medication changes.

Take the list with you when you go away from home for an extended period, for example on holiday. Doing this may prove useful to you or health professionals if you become unwell while you are away from home.

Keep all your medicines together in a safe place. Don't keep out-of-date medicines or medicines that you no longer need. Take them to a pharmacist to be disposed of safely.

Don't stop taking medicines that you have been prescribed without talking to your GP or healthcare professional.

Medicines come with a patient information leaflet. This contains information about their safe and effective use. If you do not receive an information leaflet with the medicine, ask for one.

If you have questions or concerns about your medicines, ask a doctor or healthcare professional for help. If you don't understand what the doctor tells you, ask them to explain it again more simply.

Alternatively, you can ask your local pharmacist about your medicines. You can also ask them about a Medicines Use Review. This is where the pharmacist goes through your medicines with you and discusses any problems or concerns you might have.

**Remember ... a five minute task now, could in the future save a life!**

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## Bathing Tips for People with Alzheimer's

The challenge of getting a person with Alzheimer's to bathe is not uncommon. Carers often say that their loved ones are either scared of the bathing process, or don't even see a need for it. Here are a few reasons your loved one may resist taking a bath or shower, and how to handle them:

### They think they have just taken a shower

It may have been over a week since your loved one's last shower, but memory issues can make it seem like they just took a bath a few hours ago. In these instances, it may help to offer some sort of enticement perhaps a midday outing to their favourite lunch place - to get them to clean up.

### They don't understand what it is

There may come a point when your loved one will no longer be able to comprehend the showering process. They don't understand why water is pouring on their head and soap is being rubbed on their body. This can lead to anxiety and emotional outbursts. To cut down on their fear, keep the water and air temperature warm (but not hot) and consider using a hand-held showerhead that will allow your loved one to see where the water is coming from. Approach the process gradually, in a step-by-step fashion; help them remove their clothes.



### They are afraid

If your loved one is in the advanced stages of Alzheimer's, they may have a visceral fear of water, which can make bath time difficult. Sponge baths can be a viable alternative to showers, just make sure to go slowly and communicate where you're going to put the cloth or sponge next, so as to avoid surprising them. For those who are afraid of slipping in the shower, consider installing a grab-bar or shower seat to keep them steady.

### They are embarrassed

If your loved one requires assistance to bathe, they may become embarrassed to the point of refusing to let you help them. Especially when an adult child is taking care of a parent of the opposite gender, it's common for a sense of shame to creep in for both parties. Be mindful of your loved one's desire for privacy, and know that hiring a specially-trained professional Carer to perform these more intimate tasks may help preserve your loved one's modesty and dignity.



Bear in mind also that a daily shower isn't necessary, or beneficial, for a person with Alzheimer's who is resistant to the act. Dry shampoos and soaps can help keep your loved one clean in between baths.

Above all, understand that forcing a resistant loved one to bathe will only result in conflict, and accept that it's enough to simply do your best to keep them clean and healthy.

## Some words of wisdom to reflect on

*"There comes a time in your life, when you walk away from all the drama and people who create it. You surround yourself with people who make you laugh. Forget the bad, and focus on the good. Love the people who treat you right, pray for the ones who don't. Life is too short to be anything but happy."*

If you have a computer please take a look at our website which covers all MASE activities: [www.themasegroup.com](http://www.themasegroup.com)

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