

WANDERING



Six out of ten people with dementia will wander. People with dementia can get lost outside of their home or wander away in a public place. They may try to go for a walk or to the store and forget their way back home. Wandering is dangerous, but there are strategies and services to help prevent it.

CAUSES:

- Physical changes to the brain.
- The person with dementia may be confused.
- Inability to express feelings, pain or hunger.
- Dehydrated.
- Poor lighting.
- Family and friends not around.
- Directions or task is misunderstood or too complicated.
- They may feel fear, anxiety and irritability especially if the environment is not familiar.
- Inability to separate dreams, hallucinations from reality.
- Trying to get somewhere they used to go often, searching for home or people in the past.
- Change in location.
- Sensory overload, this may be an attempt to get away from noise or too much activity.
- They may be bored, with nothing to do.
- This could be a reaction to a new medicine.
- Wandering can be a coping mechanism.

SOLUTIONS:

- Close the curtains so they do not think about going outside.
- Camouflage door by painting it same color as wall.
- Cover the doors with signs, curtains or movable screens.
- Sew or write his or her name and your phone number onto clothes.
- Place familiar furniture, photos, and objects around.
- Provide tracking bracelets such as MedicAlert, Iwatch or Fitbit for your person with dementia.
- Don't leave him or her alone near an unlocked door.
- Ask your neighbors to keep an eye out and to tell you if they see your person with dementia outside alone or walking away from home.
- Make sure they are receiving enough exercise during the day.
- Hide things like purses, coats, keys, sunglasses, items that might make your person think about leaving.
- Have a medical work up done to see if cause is from illness, pain, hunger or dehydration.
- Take them for a walk yourself.
- Distract with an activity, food or special treat.
- Have clocks around the house that shows day or night, alerting them of the time of day.
- Place child-proof locks on doors, gates, and windows.
- Put bells on doors, gates, or windows.

- Order a monitor to place on the person with dementia, alerting you when they go outside.
- Put up a fence.
- Dress your person with dementia in bright colors.
- Consider a bean bag chair, they are comfortable yet difficult to get out alone.
- Reduce the amount of noise, clutter and any signs of sensory overload.
- Keep a written log to see if there is a common occurrence that leads to wandering.
- Medications can help with the feelings that lead to wandering.

HAVE A PLAN:

- Keep a list of people to call on for help.
- Keep a list of places where the person may wander.
- Keep a recent, close-up photo and updated medical information on hand to give to police.
- Know your neighborhood.
- Know if the person with dementia is right or left handed. People with dementia generally wander in the direction of their dominant hand.
- Provide the person with an ID jewelry, tracker, and write name and number on clothing.

IF THEY WANDER OFF:

1. Stay calm.
2. Make a thorough search of the house and nearby buildings.
3. Write down what clothing the person was wearing.
4. Notify the neighbors.
5. Walk or drive around the neighborhood, or places they normally like to visit.
6. Search the immediate area for no more than 15 minutes, then contact your local police.
 - a. Tell them that the person has dementia and any other concerns you have about their safety.
 - b. Have an updated color photo and list of places they wander off to on hand for emergency's like this.