



Bermuda Hospitals Board

# Dementia

## Tips for Managing Difficult Behaviours



### WANDERING

Wandering can be one of the most frightening and dangerous dementia symptoms. Individuals with dementia can become confused and easily get lost when they wander outside of the home, even when they have spent many years in the same home.

#### TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS:

If your loved one is no longer safe to be out alone, make sure they are supervised at all times.



### MALNUTRITION

Eating either too much or too little can be a major problem for older adults with dementia. This can cause changes in nutrition, including weight gain/loss, irritability, sleeplessness, bladder or bowel problems, and disorientation.

Mealtime can become a stressful event for persons living with dementia as they may eat very slowly and/or become easily distracted by other activity.

#### TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS:

Make meals accessible and flexible. Leave healthy high-calorie snacks visible on the table and counters. Finger foods may help. Use bold contrasting coloured plates and utensils. Eat meals with them. To minimise mealtime stress, provide a calm, unrushed, environment free of distractions like TV, too much talking etc.



### SLEEPLESSNESS

Sleep changes result from the disease's impact on the brain, but the specific causes are unknown.

#### TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS:

Maintain a regular schedule of awake and sleep times. Limit daytime naps. Take your loved one outdoors on a regular basis and try to add a walk into that time. Eliminate alcohol and drinks with caffeine. Make their bedroom restful and noise-free. Identify any potential sources of pain and medications that cause wakefulness.



### BATHING RESISTANCE

(refer to the Advice on Bathing Fact Sheet)

People with dementia can sometimes have difficulty remembering to maintain good hygiene, such as brushing their teeth, toileting, bathing, and changing their clothes.

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### INCONTINENCE

Loss of bladder and/or bowel control often develops in the later stages of dementia.

#### TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS:

Remain calm and reassure the person living with dementia when they do have accidents. Provide easy to remove clothing, like elasticated waist trousers. Make the bathroom easy to find and use. Always keep the bathroom light on. Ensure the person can safely access the toilet, especially at night. Reduce fluid consumption before bedtime. Establish a consistent bathroom schedule. Incontinence pads may eventually be needed.



### REPETITION

Constant repetition of words or other redundant behaviours can be irritating not only for the caregiver but also for the person with dementia.

#### TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS:

Reassure them, provide comfort, and be patient. Try not to remind them or yell at them that they just asked the same question. Try diverting their attention with a snack or new activity. Don't discuss plans with them until right before the event to avoid further confusion. Try using consistent reminders around the house.



### EXPLETIVES

This is especially common in fronto-temporal dementia. Foul language may stream out of the person's mouth, even if they've never uttered a swear word before in their life. This can be hurtful and embarrassing to this person's family or friends.

#### TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS:

Be observant. Try to determine what triggers your loved one to use expletives and avoid those situations. Do not curse or shout back. Maintain firm neutral voice. It is important to recognise that a person with dementia may not be aware of their inappropriate behaviour. You should apologise on their behalf to anyone who may have taken offense. You may also alert persons beforehand that this behaviour may occur.

### SEXUAL INAPPROPRIATENESS

Aging does not necessarily cause decline in sexual desire. Inappropriate behaviour can be defined as any vigorous sexual drive after the onset of dementia that interferes with normal activities of living or is pursued at inconvenient times and with unwilling partners.

#### TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS:

Removal of precipitating factors. Providing opportunities to relieve sexual urges. Distraction. Clothing that opens in the back so that it cannot be easily removed, activities that involve the hands to minimize public fondling or masturbation. Affection from family or pets to satiate patients' needs for companionship, love and intimacy.