

Behavioral And Psychological Symptoms Of Dementia: Agitation and Aggression

Dementia is a progressive decline in one's memory and other thinking skills that interferes with the ability to perform usual daily activities.

Dementia not only affects memory but also causes impairment in one's ability to judge, plan, speak, and results in changes in behavior.

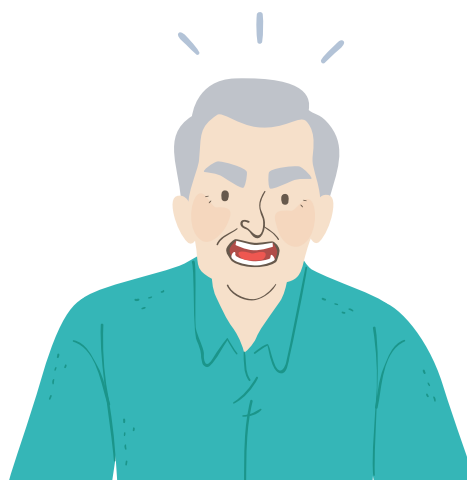
As dementia progresses, you may notice that the changes in behaviour become more significant.



Here are some tips to help you understand and manage their behaviour.

Agitation / Aggression

- Get upset with the carer frequently.
- Refuse to do basic routine activities such as bathing/grooming.
- Resist help and are hard to handle.
- Easily get irritated or engage in arguments.
- Shout angrily, sometimes even becoming physically aggressive (such as throwing things or harming themselves or others).



What can I do as a caregiver?

- Watch out for signs and reasons behind this behavior. They may have unmet needs (e.g., hunger, thirst, pain, constipation, itching in private areas). If you suspect they are thirsty, you may ask, "Do you want water?" and hold the water in front of them.
- Always validate their feelings.
- Approach with a gentle tone and soft voice; acknowledge and reassure them.
- Do not argue or confront, as it may worsen the situation.
- Pay attention to your facial expressions and gestures; do not frown, try to smile, and be gentle. They may become more agitated if they feel you are angry with them, as they may not understand what you say.
- Distract and engage them with other activities (e.g., take a walk, share an album, read a magazine).

If their behaviour becomes aggressive and you feel unsafe in their presence, you should:

- Stay calm and avoid arguing or scolding them.
- If necessary, leave them in one room (ensuring it's safe) and keep an eye on them to ensure safety. Give them time to calm down.
- Seek help early when the behavior becomes challenging and poses a risk of harm to themselves or caregivers. A doctor's review will be needed to initiate or adjust their medications.



Managing this behaviour can be challenging, so always remember to take care of yourselves by taking a break or talking to someone. It is okay to seek help from doctors, support groups, or counselors for additional support.



Available resources for caregivers:

Dementia Singapore

A social service agency for dementia care, caregiver support, training and consultancy.



<https://dementia.org.sg>

Dementia Helpline:
6377 0700

CARA SG

Mobile app to access personalised support for persons living with dementia and caregivers.



<https://cara.sg>

Contributed by Nursing and Psychology, Allied Health Services

This brochure is produced for educational purposes and should not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Please seek the advice of a qualified healthcare provider before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health or medical condition.

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