

# Behavioral And Psychological Symptoms In Dementia: Agitation and Aggression

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

Dementia does not only affect memory, it also cause impairment in one's ability to judge, plan, impairment in speech and change in behaviour.

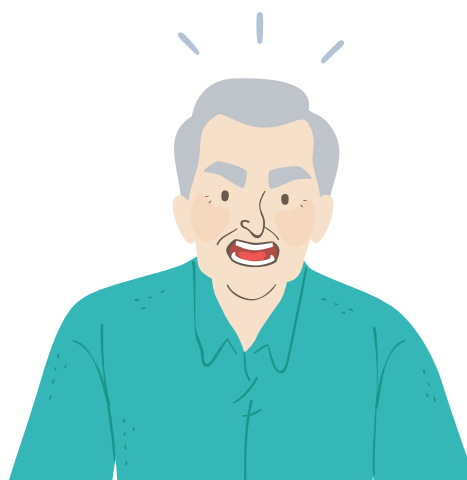
As dementia progresses, you may notice the change in behaviour becomes more significant.



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

## **Agitation / Aggression**

- Get upset with carer frequently, refuse to do basic routine activities such as bathing/grooming
- Resist help/hard to handle
- Easily get irritated or to argue
- Shouting angrily, sometimes even physically aggressive (such as throwing things/harming themselves or others)

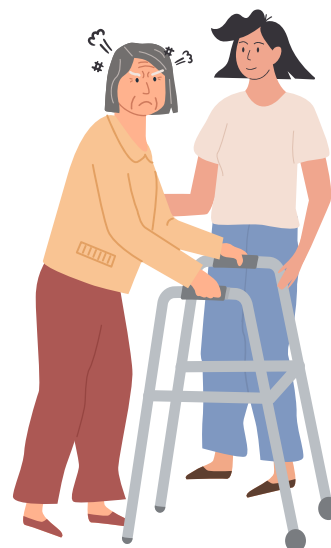


### **What should I do?**

- Watch out for the signs and reasons behind this behaviour - they maybe have unmet needs (e.g. hungry/ thirsty/ pain/ constipation/ itchy over private areas), if you suspect they are thirsty, you may ask: "you want water?" and hold the water in front of them
- Validate his/her feeling always
- Approach with gentle tone and soft voice, acknowledge and reassure them
- Do not argue or confront, which may worsen the situation
- Watch out for our facial expression and gestures: do not frown, try to smile and be gentle (they may get more agitated if they feel you are angry with them as they may not understand what you say)
- Distract and engage your loved ones with other activities (e.g. take a walk/sharing album/read a magazine)

## If they start to behave aggressively and you feel unsafe to be around, you should:

- Stay calm and do not argue/scold them
- Leave them in one room if necessary (make sure the room is safe), and keep an eye on them to ensure safety, give them time to calm down
- Look for help early when the behaviour becomes challenging, imposing harm to themselves/caregivers. A doctor review will be needed to initiate/adjust their medications.



To manage this behaviour can be challenging, so do always remember to take care of yourselves by taking a break or talk to someone to vent. It is okay to seek help from doctors, support group or counsellors for extra support.

