

# Behavioral And Psychological Symptoms In Dementia: Wandering Behavioral

Dementia causes people to lose their ability to recognize familiar places and faces. It's common for a person living with dementia to wander or become lost or confused about their location, and it can happen at any stage of the disease.



## There are many reasons why a person who has dementia might wander, including the following:

- **Stress or fear:** The person with dementia might wander as a reaction to feeling nervous in a crowded area, such as a supermarket or restaurant.
- **Searching:** He or she might get lost while searching for something or someone, such as past friends.
- **Basic needs:** He or she might be looking for a bathroom or food or want to go outdoors.
- **Following past routines:** He or she might try to “go to work” or buy groceries even though he no longer need to go to work/ buy grocery.
- **Visual-spatial challenges:** He or she can get lost even in familiar places because dementia affects the parts of the brain important for visual guidance and navigation.



## Tips on how to promote safe wandering:

### Identify the following:

- **Ensure that their basic needs are met** e.g. Has the person gone to the bathroom? Is he or she thirsty or hungry?
- **Learn more about their routines** e.g. Identify the most likely times of day that wandering may occur and plan activities at that time. Activities and exercise can reduce anxiety and restlessness.
- **Following past routines:** He or she might try to “go to work” or buy groceries even though he no longer need to go to work/ buy grocery.
- **Identification card/bracelet:** Get the person with dementia to carry an identification such as an identity bracelet or card with their names, addresses and/or contact numbers. This can be helpful when he or she is found by others/police.

### Remove the following:

- Reduce objects that may prompt or encourage the person with dementia to wander, e.g. handbags, house keys.
- Remove any obstacles to allow person with dementia to wander about safely – ensure supervision is available and the person with dementia is steady to walk around to ensure the safety of the person.



## **When a person with dementia goes missing:**

- Caregiver to remain calm.
- Download Dementia Friends mobile app and register and upload his/her photo to send an alert to the community that the person with dementia had gone missing
- Make a thorough search of the house and nearby
- Try to remember what he or she was wearing before leaving the house.
- Walk or drive around the vicinity and/or to any places he or she may visit regularly.
- Do have someone to stay at home in case he or she returns home or to answer any phone calls.
- Contact the police if immediate searches showed no result. leaving the house.

## **When the missing person returns home:**

- Notify the police immediately.
- Do not scold or show anxiety no matter how worried or inconvenienced it had been. They may have been confused and frightened themselves.
- Check for any injuries or whether he/she is hungry/ thirsty.
- Provide reassurance and get back into a regular routine as quickly as possible.

