

Living Well with Dementia Caregiver Tips on Getting Lost



Watch for warning signs that your loved one may be disoriented or confused such as:

- Appears nervous or becomes more anxious in settings where there are crowds of people (such as grocery stores).
- Becomes forgetful when traveling to familiar places.
- Asks about family or friends who may have passed away.
- Takes longer than usual on walks or drives.
- Has conversations about completing tasks in the past (such as having to go to work).
- Has a difficult time locating familiar settings such as the bathroom, kitchen or bedroom.
- States they want to go home even if they are already home.
- Becomes increasingly restless or paces often.

Wandering is a serious risk for individuals living with dementia and can be extremely dangerous. It is important to watch for warning signs that your loved one may be at risk for wandering.

Even in the early stages of dementia, someone could become disoriented or confused. In later stages it can be even more dangerous because they may even forget their name or address. It is important to develop a plan early for this type of situation to reduce the stress experienced when a loved one becomes lost.

How You Can Help

Prevent Wandering

- Develop a routine that provides structure.
- Ensure the individual is always supervised. Do not leave them alone at home or in a car by themselves.
- Make sure they are not hungry or need to use the restroom. Sometimes the individual will wander in search of fulfilling a basic need.
- Plan activities during times they are more likely to wander.
- Place alarms on doors or windows within the home that will alert you if your loved one is trying to leave.

Develop a Plan

- Look into bracelets or other jewelry that can help identify the individual has memory impairment (the Alzheimer's Association has a program called MedicAlert + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return).
- Ask for family, neighbors and friends to reach out if they see the individual alone and to stay with them to ensure their safety.
- Keep a list of familiar places the individual may wander to.
- Contact the local police department to provide them with information on the individual living with dementia so they are aware of the situation should a crisis arise.
- Keep up to date pictures of the individual to show to police if they become lost.
- Complete the Supplemental ALI 911 form developed for the State of New Hampshire Department of Safety (see attached).

For more information about caregiver tips or program availability through Living Well with Dementia, please contact Easterseals Homemakers & Health Services at 603.335.1770.