



A Plan For Senior Care's Guide To Wandering

Wandering is one of the most troubling behavioral changes when a person has Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia.



Geriatricians say that over half of these seniors are at risk of becoming lost. It seems that every week we come across a news article about a senior with dementia who goes missing. Most of these stories have a happy ending—perhaps the person is found at a store they remember, or in a park, unable to remember the way home. But some of these stories have a far less happy outcome, with the senior being found dead or never found at all.

The term “wandering” isn't quite accurate, because the person with dementia most likely has a purpose in their mind. Most likely, your loved one isn't trying to “get away,” but they may be adhering to that pattern like taking walks after dinner. They might be feeling anxious or in pain, but they are unable to express it. Most likely, they are bored or lonely.

It's also important to seek a medical evaluation of the problem to identify the triggers. Side effects of medications, infections, delirium and incontinence can increase wandering in a person with dementia.

If your loved one lives at home, here are seven steps to keep them safe:

- Provide appropriate activities and exercise.
- Learn to redirect. Redirect them to safe activities that fill the need for a sense of purpose.
- Limit daytime naps.
- Adapt your home to keep your loved one safe.
- Be sure your loved one always carries ID, and a medical alert to tell others they have memory loss.
- Let neighbors and local merchants know about your loved one's condition. Ask them to contact you if they see your loved one alone.
- Call 9-1-1 sooner rather than later if your loved one is lost. Have a current photo of your loved one available to share with the authorities. You can call the Alzheimer's Association Helpline at 1-800-272-3900 for help if police hesitate to step in.

Don't leave your loved one alone; someone should be with them at all times. This can be exhausting for family, especially if the person wanders at night, so learn about respite services.

If your loved one is struggling at home to care for her/himself and you would like to explore senior care and housing options, please give us a call today. A Plan For Senior Care will be happy to create a personalized care plan for your loved one.