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Coping With Alzheimer's Behaviors: Rummaging and Hiding Things

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Someone with [Alzheimer's disease](#) may start rummaging or searching through cabinets, drawers, closets, the refrigerator, and other places where things are stored. They may also hide items around the house.

In some cases, there might be a logical reason for this behavior. For instance, they may be looking for something specific but not able to tell you what it is. They may be hungry or [bored](#). Try to understand what is causing the behavior so you can fit your response to the cause.

Six Tips to Help Manage Behavior Changes in Alzheimer's Disease



Tips to make rummaging safer

You can take steps that allow the person with Alzheimer's to rummage while [keeping the person safe](#). Try these tips:

- Lock up dangerous or toxic products or place them out of the person's sight and reach.
- Remove spoiled food from the refrigerator and cabinets. Someone with Alzheimer's may look for snacks but lack the judgment or [sense of taste](#) to stay away from foods that have gone bad.
- Remove valuable items that could be misplaced or hidden by the person, such as important papers, checkbooks, credit cards, jewelry, cellphones, and keys.
- People with Alzheimer's often hide, lose, or throw away mail. If this is a serious problem, consider getting a post office box. If you have a yard with a fence and a locked gate, place your mailbox outside the gate.

Create a dedicated space

Try creating a special place where the person with Alzheimer's can rummage freely or sort things. This could be a chest of drawers, a bag of objects, or a basket of clothing to fold or unfold. Give the person a personal box, chest, or cupboard to store special objects. You may have to remind the person where to find their personal storage place.

More tips to cope with rummaging and hiding

Here are some more suggestions to help manage rummaging and hiding behavior:

- Keep the person with Alzheimer's from going into any unused room. This limits their rummaging and hiding things.
- Search the house to learn where the person often hides things. Once you find these places, check them often when out of sight of the person.
- Keep all trash cans covered or out of sight. People with Alzheimer's may not remember the purpose of the container or may rummage through it.
- Check trash containers before you empty them in case something has been hidden there or thrown away by accident.



[Read and share this infographic](#) about how to communicate with a person who has Alzheimer's disease.

You may also be interested in

- Learning more about [home safety and Alzheimer's](#)
- Getting tips for [managing and personality and behavior changes in Alzheimer's](#)
- Finding [resources for help with Alzheimer's caregiving](#)

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For more information

NIA Alzheimer's and related Dementias Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center

800-438-4380

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www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers

The NIA ADEAR Center offers information and free print publications about Alzheimer's and related dementias for families, caregivers, and health professionals. ADEAR Center staff answer telephone, email, and written requests and make referrals to local and national resources.

Alzheimers.gov

www.alzheimers.gov

Explore the Alzheimers.gov website for information and resources on Alzheimer's and related dementias from across the federal government.

Eldercare Locator

800-677-1116

eldercarelocator@USAgings.org

<https://eldercare.acl.gov>

Alzheimer's Association

800-272-3900

866-403-3073 (TTY)

info@alz.org

www.alz.org

Alzheimer's Foundation of America

866-232-8484

info@alzfdn.org

<https://alzfdn.org>

Family Caregiver Alliance

800-445-8106

info@caregiver.org

www.caregiver.org

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