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# Alzheimer's Caregiving: Managing Personality and Behavior Changes

[Español](#)

[Alzheimer's disease](#) changes the brain in ways that can affect how a person acts. Some days, the person might seem like themselves, and other days they might act in unusual ways. This variation from one day to the next is common for people with Alzheimer's. On this page, learn about some of the common behavior changes that affect people with Alzheimer's and how to manage these changes.

## How does Alzheimer's affect behavior?

In addition to thinking and memory problems, people with Alzheimer's may experience symptoms such as agitation, trouble sleeping, and hallucinations. They may wander, pace, and behave in unusual ways. These problems can make your job as a caregiver harder. It's important to remember that the disease, not the person with Alzheimer's, causes these changes.



Common behavior changes in Alzheimer's include:

- Showing signs of anxiety or fear
- [Getting upset, worried, and angry](#) more easily
- Acting [depressed](#) or not interested in things
- [Hiding things](#) or believing other people are hiding things
- [Imagining things](#) that aren't there
- Feeling suspicious of or threatened by others, for little or no reason
- Pacing a lot of the time
- [Showing unusual sexual behavior](#)
- [Wandering away from home](#)
- Hitting other people
- Misunderstanding what they see or hear
- Having difficulty sleeping through the night

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



In addition to changes in the brain, other things may affect how people with Alzheimer's behave. The following are factors that may cause distressing behaviors in people with Alzheimer's:

- Emotions such as [sadness](#), fear, stress, confusion, or anxiety
- Health-related problems, such as [pain](#), [lack of sleep](#), and problems [seeing](#) or [hearing](#)
- Other physical issues, such as [constipation](#), hunger, or thirst
- Side effects of [new medications](#)
- A noisy or stressful environment (for example, many conversations at once or a loud TV or radio)

Sudden or rapidly fluctuating changes in behavior, especially if the person has had an infection or recent medication changes, should be immediately brought to a doctor's attention.

[Caregivers](#) may find it helpful to consider whether changes in behavior are caused by the disease itself or something else, such as the environment. But figuring out the cause of a behavior change is not always an easy task. Keeping track of common behavioral changes can help caregivers and health care providers recognize a pattern and determine the cause of the behavioral change.

## Tips to manage behavior changes

Learning ways to manage behavior changes can make everyday life less stressful for a person with Alzheimer's, their caregivers, and their loved ones. Here are some tips:

- Be patient, try not to show frustration, and avoid arguing.
- Reassure the person that you are there to help.
- Learn [how to communicate with a person with Alzheimer's](#).
- Redirect their attention to a new object or activity, such as listening to music, reading a book, or going for a walk.

- Create a comforting home setting by reducing noise and clutter and keeping well-loved objects (such as photos) around the home.
- Try to keep the person to a routine by bathing, dressing, and eating at the same time each day.
- Find ways for the person to be physically active, which can improve mood and sleep.



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

## Safety alert

Some behaviors, like [wandering](#) or [rummaging](#), can put the person with Alzheimer's at risk. To [keep the person safe](#) in case they get lost, make sure they carry an ID or wear a medical bracelet with contact information at all times. You can also [keep the home safe](#) for the person with Alzheimer's by locking up any dangerous items in the house or putting them out of sight and reach.

## You may also be interested in

- Learning [how to cope with agitation, aggression, and sundowning in Alzheimer's](#)
- Reading about how [Alzheimer's changes communication skills](#)
- Finding [resources to 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

[adear@nia.nih.gov](mailto:adear@nia.nih.gov)

[www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers](http://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](http://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](mailto:eldercarelocator@USAgings.org)

<https://eldercare.acl.gov>

### Alzheimer's Association

800-272-3900

866-403-3073 (TTY)

[info@alz.org](mailto:info@alz.org)

[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)

### Alzheimer's Foundation of America

866-232-8484

[info@alzfdn.org](mailto:info@alzfdn.org)

[www.alzfdn.org](http://www.alzfdn.org)

### Family Caregiver Alliance

800-445-8106

[info@caregiver.org](mailto:info@caregiver.org)

[www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)

## National Respite Locator Service

[www.archrespite.org/respitelocator](http://www.archrespite.org/respitelocator)

This content is provided by the NIH National Institute on Aging (NIA). NIA scientists and other experts review this content to ensure it is accurate and up to date.

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