

Wandering And Alzheimer's Disease

Many people with Alzheimer's disease wander away from their home or caregiver. As the caregiver, you need to know how to limit wandering and prevent the person from becoming lost. This will help keep the person safe and give you greater peace of mind.

First Steps

Try to follow these steps before the person with Alzheimer's disease wanders:

- Make sure the person carries some kind of ID or wears a medical bracelet. If the person gets lost and can't communicate clearly, an ID will let others know about his or her illness. It also shows where the person lives.
- Consider enrolling the person in the MedicAlert FOUND California Program (call **844-435-7259** for more information or visit www.medicalert.org).
- Let neighbors and the local police know that the person with Alzheimer's tends to wander. Ask them to alert you immediately if the person is seen alone and on the move.
- Place labels in garments to aid in identification.
- Keep an article of the person's worn, unwashed clothing in a plastic bag to aid in finding him or her with the use of dogs.
- Keep a recent photograph or video recording of the person to help police if he or she becomes lost



Tips To Prevent Wandering

Here are some tips to help prevent the person with Alzheimer's from wandering away from home:

- Keep doors locked. Consider a keyed deadbolt, or add another lock placed up high or down low on the door. If the person can open a lock, you may need to get a new latch or lock.*
- Use loosely fitting doorknob covers so that the cover turns instead of the actual knob.*
- Place STOP, DO NOT ENTER, or CLOSED signs on doors.
- Hang a curtain over exit doors to hide the door and resemble windows.
- Divert the attention of the person with Alzheimer's disease away from using the door by placing small scenic posters on the door; placing removable gates, curtains, or brightly colored streamers across the door; or wallpapering the door to match any adjoining walls.
- Install safety devices found in hardware stores to limit how much windows can be opened.
- Install an "announcing system" that chimes when a door is opened.
- Secure the yard with fencing and a locked gate.
- Keep shoes, keys, suitcases, coats, hats, and other signs of departure out of sight.
- Do not leave a person with Alzheimer's who has a history of wandering unattended.

* Due to the potential hazard they could cause if an emergency exit is needed, locked doors and doorknob covers should be used only when a caregiver is present.

We Can Help!

Alzheimer's Orange County

Call 844.373.4400

For more caregiver tips

Visit us at:
www.alzoc.org/resources

Information taken from the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health> | NIH May 2017 | Reviewed by AlzOC June 2022