



Wandering

This fact sheet provides some suggestions to help in the management of people with wandering behaviour.

Some reasons why people wander:

Change In Environment

- A person can often feel disorientated and confused in a new environment.
- Wandering can decrease once the person gets used to the new situation.

Loss Of Memory

- It can be due to short-term memory loss.
- The person may start off wanting to go somewhere eg. the shop or a friend's house and then forget where they are going.

Excess Energy

- Wandering is a way of using up excess energy.

Being Bored

- People who find it hard to concentrate for any period of time often wander.

Used To Walk A Lot Before

- People may have been wanderers in the past and are just continuing a habit.

Agitation

- Agitation can cause people to wander or pace up and down.
- A way of expressing discomfort or pain

Confusing Night and Day

- People with dementia may think that night is day so they may want to go for a walk.

Searching For Something

- As people become more confused they may wander off to try and find something or someone.

Response To Medication

- Wandering can often be a side effect.
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Strategies to cope:

Seek Medical Advice

- A physical check-up is very important and may help find the reason for wandering.

Try To Stay Calm

- Try to comfort and reassure, try not to get anxious or annoyed, as the person is probably already confused and agitated.

- Get the person back into a regular routine as soon as possible.

Monitor When Wandering Occurs

- If possible try and keep a record to see what triggers off the wandering. Eg/ time of day, people.
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Safety Measures:

- If the person wanders and you cannot find them immediately notify the police, if they return home notify the police.
- Ask neighbours and shopkeepers if they can help keep track of the person.
- Do not confront the person, walk with them and try and divert their attention and encourage them to return home.
- Accompany the person on their walk.

- Secure the environment e.g. external doors secured by deadlocks - make sure there is a key hidden nearby in case of emergencies.
- Secure the garden so it is a safe place for the person to wander.
- Use a bell or buzzer that sounds when the external door is opened.
- Use a night-light.



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Night wanderers:

- Create an environment that encourages sleep e.g. quiet and relaxing.
 - Establish a routine for going to bed e.g. cup of warm milk.
 - Try a warm bath or shower. increase what the person does during the day so they are tired at night.
 - Make sure the environment is secure.
 - If the person wakes at night reassure them that they are safe and where they belong.
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