

## ALZHEIMER'S CAREGIVING

## Managing Personality and Behavior Changes in Alzheimer's

Alzheimer's disease causes brain cells to die, so the brain works less well over time. This changes how a person acts. This article has suggestions that may help you understand and cope with changes in personality and behavior in a person with [Alzheimer's disease](#).



### Common Changes in Personality and Behavior

Common personality and behavior changes you may see include:

- [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
- [Wandering away from home](#)
- Pacing a lot
- [Showing unusual sexual behavior](#)
- Hitting you or other people
- Misunderstanding what he or she sees or hears

You also may notice that the person stops caring about how he or she looks, stops [bathing](#), and wants to wear the same clothes every day.

### Other Factors That Can Affect Behavior

In addition to changes in the brain, other things may affect how people with Alzheimer's behave:

- Feelings such as sadness, fear, stress, confusion, or anxiety
- Health-related problems, including illness, [pain](#), [new medications](#), or [lack of sleep](#)
- Other physical issues like infections, [constipation](#), hunger or [thirst](#), or problems [seeing](#) or [hearing](#)

Other problems in their surroundings may affect behavior for a person with Alzheimer's disease. Too much noise, such as TV, radio, or many people talking at once can cause frustration and confusion. Stepping from one type of flooring to another or the way the floor looks may make the person think he or she needs to take a step down. Mirrors may make them think that a mirror image is another person in the room. For tips on creating an Alzheimer's-safe home, visit [Home Safety and Alzheimer's Disease](#).

If you don't know what is causing the problem, call the doctor. It could be caused by a physical or [medical issue](#).

## Keep Things Simple...and Other Tips

Caregivers cannot stop Alzheimer's-related changes in personality and behavior, but they can learn to cope with them. Here are some tips:

- Keep things simple. Ask or say one thing at a time.
- Have a daily routine, so the person knows when certain things will happen.
- Reassure the person that he or she is safe and you are there to help.
- Focus on his or her feelings rather than words. For example, say, "You seem worried."
- Don't argue or try to reason with the person.
- Try not to show your frustration or anger. If you get upset, take deep breaths and count to 10. If it's safe, leave the room for a few minutes.
- Use humor when you can.
- Give people who pace a lot a safe place to walk. Provide comfortable, sturdy shoes. Give them light snacks to eat as they walk, so they don't lose too much weight, and make sure they have enough to drink.
- Try using music, singing, or dancing to distract the person.
- Ask for help. For instance, say, "Let's set the table" or "I need help folding the clothes."

[Talk with the person's doctor](#) about problems like hitting, biting, [depression](#), or [hallucinations](#). [Medications](#) are available to treat some behavioral symptoms.

Read about [this topic in Spanish](#). Lea sobre [este tema en español](#).

## For More Information About Personality and Behavior Changes in Alzheimer's

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

800-438-4380 (toll-free)

[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 portal for information and resources on Alzheimer's and related dementias from across the federal government.

### Alzheimer's Association

800-272-3900 (toll-free)

866-403-3073 (TTY/toll-free)

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

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

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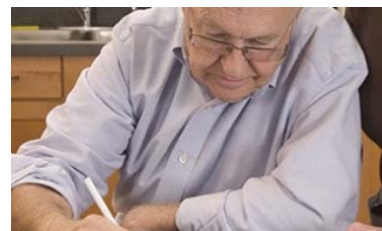
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[Managing Money Problems in Alzheimer's Disease](#)

If you are interested in learning more about Alzheimer's & Dementia, please call us at 1-800-438-4380, Mon-Fri, 8:30 am-5:00 pm Eastern Time or send an email to [adear@nia.nih.gov](mailto:adear@nia.nih.gov)

