

Dementia Friendly – What You Should Know



**Supporting the
well-being of
Sun City residents
living with
memory loss**

Understand the Terms

Dementia

An umbrella term describing a collection of symptoms caused by disorders affecting the brain. It is not one specific disease. Affects thinking, behavior and the ability to perform everyday tasks. Brain function is affected enough to interfere with normal social or working life.

Alzheimer's Disease

- Most common
- 40-70% of all dementias
- Likely starts 10+ years before memory or cognitive problems, progressive decline

Vascular Dementia

- Second most common, with sudden onset
- 15-25% of all dementias
- Stroke related

Lewy Body Dementia

- Third most common
- 2-20% of all dementias
- Hallucinations
- Parkinson's like, hunched over
- More common in males

Fronto Temporal Dementias

- Fourth most common
- 2-20% of all dementias

Other Dementias

Dementias associated with CTE, Parkinson's disease, Huntington disease, head trauma, HIV, Crutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, etc.

Normal Aging vs Alzheimer's Disease

Normal Aging

Cognition

- Sometimes forgetting names, remember them later
- Confused on day of week, but recall it later
- Misplacing things but finding them later
- Occasional errors balancing checkbook
- Need occasional help with remote control / microwave
- Sometimes trouble finding right word
- Making a bad decision once in a while

Physical

- Vision changes related to cataracts

Behavioral

- Sometimes feeling weary of work, family, social
- Upset or irritable when a routine is disrupted

Early Signs of Dementia

Cognition

- Memory loss that disrupts life
- Confusion with time or place or names
- Misplacing things and no ability to retrace steps
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home or leisure
- Challenges in planning or solving problems
- New problems with words in speaking or writing
- Decreased or poor judgment

Physical

- Trouble understanding visual images & spatial relationships

Behavioral

- Withdrawal from work/social activities
- Changes in mood & personality
- Wandering

Wandering



It is estimated that more than 50% of people will wander at some point, presenting a unique challenge to a senior community

Symptoms

- ✓ **Wandering has a purpose** – the majority of people who wander become disoriented while they are going about their routine activities.
- ✓ **Most do not consider themselves “lost”**. They are responding to an unmet basic need (hunger, thirst, toileting, pain, **fear**).
- ✓ **The diseased brain is unable to recall** familiar surroundings or routes. Dementia changes a person’s ability to think clearly, recognize persons, landmarks, or other familiar objects and are unable to problem-solve or identify themselves and may display poor situational or contextual awareness because their mind is not logical and they are lost both physically and mentally.

Indicators

- ✓ Inappropriate clothing for the weather
- ✓ Inappropriate social behavior for the setting
- ✓ Can’t seem to navigate crosswalk or sidewalk
- ✓ Aimlessness
- ✓ Walking **in** the street or side of the road
- ✓ Seems to have trouble interacting with those around him/her

Responding to Wandering



Challenges in identifying a person with dementia

- May seem coherent and oriented in casual conversation (good social skills can mask underlying issues)
- May seem to be on their way to a routine outing
- Can be aware of their memory loss and try to have casual conversation that is devoid of real information

Question: "What is your name, sir?"

Their Answer: "Oh, didn't I tell you that already?"

Common reactions of people with dementia:

- Limited ability to understand situation, becoming overwhelmed or frustrated
- May exhibit fear-based impulsive behavior
- Exaggerated responses, outbursts, screaming or unprovoked violence

Responding to Wandering



Assess the situation - keep person safe, engaged, and establish their identity/emergency contact information

- ✓ Introduce yourself. Ask them their name. Ask and explain before touching.
- ✓ Ask basic evaluation questions:
 - Where are you coming from?
 - Where are you going to?
 - Who are you meeting?
- ✓ Listen for frustration, provide reassurance (You're safe here, I'm sorry you are upset)
- ✓ Observe if they have ID bracelet, GPS bracelet or identification in wallet or purse
- ✓ Assume standard safety protocols, be prepared for common reactions
- ✓ Call for back up

Key Learnings:

- ✓ Create calm environment, remove stimulation and background distractions
- ✓ Don't argue with the person, distract and redirect by asking for help with task
- ✓ Repeat what they say / affirm responses



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