



A Caregiver's Guide to Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia

The Bristol
ASSISTED LIVING

Caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease or other type of dementia can be rewarding, but it is not without its challenges. Many caregivers have difficulty juggling the needs of their mom or dad, while also fulfilling their other responsibilities at home and work.

As leaders in the field of memory care, The Bristal has over two decades of experience in caring for seniors with memory-related cognitive disorders. We've developed this resource guide to help families who want to provide the best care possible for their loved ones but might struggle with some common issues caregivers face.

Whether you are a new caregiver or need help troubleshooting a challenging behavior, this guide is filled with practical tips to help make caregiving a little easier.

If you have questions or need help, please don't hesitate to contact us.

The Bristal Team



Helping Someone With Alzheimer's Disease Overcome Chronic Fatigue

Fortunately, many underlying conditions that may contribute to low energy and chronic fatigue can be treated. Here are a few steps you can take to help a loved one with Alzheimer's disease improve their energy level:

1. Schedule an appointment with their primary care provider. They can determine if there is a medical reason behind your loved one's fatigue, like a nutritional deficiency or thyroid disease. A family physician can also assess them for depression and make treatment recommendations.

If you suspect a medication may be the cause of their fatigue, talk with your loved one's provider to see if there are alternatives available.

2. Adopt a Mediterranean-style diet. Focus on fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, olive oil, lean meats, and fish. Work on reducing or eliminating white flour products, pastries, and sugary drinks.

[This approach will help you](#) improve your aging loved one's nutritional intake while stabilizing their blood sugar.

3. Investigate methods for managing agitation and anxiety. Both conditions often lead to sleepless nights for those with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers. The [Alzheimer's Association Caregiver Center](#) has a variety of information and resources dedicated to improving sleep for individuals with dementia.

4. Create an inviting sleep environment at bedtime. Many people with Alzheimer's wake up more often and stay awake longer at night. Helping them stay active during the day and ease into a bedtime routine at night may help with their quality of sleep. This tip may also help reduce the symptoms of sundowning.

Addressing Wandering Behavior and Wanting to “Go Home”

Anyone who is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or another type of dementia is at risk for wandering. It can occur during any stage of the disease and usually happens when someone feels bored, uneasy, unhappy, lonely, or cannot locate familiar places or objects.

Wandering can occur both indoors and outdoors. Signs include pacing, aimlessly moving around the house, or cues like the person asking to “go home.”

Read on for tips to limit wandering and what to do if it happens.

Why Do People With Dementia Want to “Go Home”?

You may notice your loved one with dementia asking – or trying – to “go home,” even if they are already at home. What does this behavior mean, and how can you address it?

Asking to go home, or other behaviors like packing, can indicate that the person is thinking of their childhood home or another home of their past. In this case, “home” represents not so much a physical location, but a place in time that represented happiness or security. Wanting to go home can also be your loved one's way of expressing their need for calmness or a more structured routine.

Redirecting can be a helpful strategy when someone with dementia wants to go home. You might say, “Mom, I see you've packed up to leave. Why don't I help you unpack and get settled?” Don't try to reason with the person or explain that they are home; simply move their attention on to something else.

You might also try to talk to them about favorite memories from their childhood – perhaps baking or taking walks outdoors – and incorporate them into their daily routine for a sense of comfort.

How to Prevent Wandering Behavior

Knowing what usually triggers wandering can be the key to preventing it. Try to be aware of when and under what circumstances your loved one starts to wander.

You can also try some of the following tips if they're appropriate for your situation. Depending on your loved one, you may need to try more than one strategy before finding what works best for you.

- Keep the person engaged in other activities. Choose things they enjoy and can find purpose in. Helping with light housework, sorting items, or looking at a photo album can all be good choices.
- Ensure your loved one's needs are met. Because communication is more difficult for people with dementia, feeling hungry, thirsty, tired, or needing to use the bathroom can all trigger wandering. In reality, the person simply wants their needs to be met.
- Keep doors locked and car keys hidden. In addition, [The Mayo Clinic](#) advises covering doors with curtains that match the walls, or even taping a sign to a door, to help keep people with dementia from exiting the home. You might consider installing a bell or alarm that rings when a door is opened as an added safety measure.

