

People with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia may become agitated or aggressive as the disease gets worse. Agitation means that a person is restless and worried, and they aren't able to settle down. Try the following tips to help manage these symptoms.

Communication

Be Patient & Try Not to Show Frustration

- > Speak calmly and be aware of your facial expressions and body language
- > Listen to the person's concerns and avoid arguing
- > Reassure the person that they are safe, and that you are there to help
- > Use other communication methods, such as gentle touching, to help them calm down
- > Take deep breaths and count to 10

Environment

Creating a Comforting Home Setting

- > Try to keep to a routine, such as bathing, dressing and eating at the same times daily
- > Keep well-loved objects and photos around the home
- > Reduce noise and clutter
- > Play soothing music
- > Let in natural light during the day
- > Slow down and try to relax if you think your own worries may be causing concern

Activities

Try Focusing on an Object or Activity

- > Distract the person with a snack or beverage
- > Watch a favorite TV show
- > Listen to music, sing or dance
- > Go for a walk
- > Read a book or something else enjoyable
- > Do a household chore, like folding laundry

Safety

Protect Yourself and Others

- > Hide or lock up car keys and items that could be used in a harmful way, including guns and kitchen knives
- > If the person becomes aggressive, stay at a safe distance until the behavior stops
- > Talk to a doctor if aggressive behaviors worsen and consider medications that may help
- > In an emergency, call 911 and explain to responders that the person has dementia

Sundowning

Avoid Late-Day Confusion

When restlessness, agitation, irritability or confusion happen as daylight begins to fade, it's known as sundowning.

Being overly tired can increase late-afternoon and nighttime restlessness.

Try taking these steps to help prevent sundowning:

- > Stick to a schedule, including bedtime routines
- > Plan activities that use more energy early in the day
- > Set a quiet, peaceful mood in the evening to help the person relax
- > Help the person exercise each day
- > Avoid alcohol and caffeine
- > Limit long naps and dozing late in the day

Five Tips to Help You Cope

From the Alzheimer's Association

1

Manage Your Stress Level

Stress can cause physical problems (blurred vision, stomach irritation, high blood pressure) and changes in behavior (irritability, lack of concentration, change in appetite). Note your symptoms and discuss with a doctor, as needed. Try to find relaxation techniques that work for you.

2

Be Realistic

The care you give does make a difference, but many behaviors can't be controlled. Grieve the losses, focus on positive times as they arise, and enjoy good memories.

3

Know You're Doing Your Best

Remember that the care you provide makes a difference and that you are doing the best you can. You may feel guilty because you can't do more, but individual care needs change as Alzheimer's progresses. You can't promise how care will be delivered, but you can make sure the person with the disease is well cared for and safe. For support and encouragement, join an online or in-person caregiver support group.

4

Take a Break

It's normal to need a break from caregiving duties. No one can do it all by themselves. Look into respite care to allow time to take care of yourself.

5

Accept Changes As They Occur

People with Alzheimer's disease change over time and so do their needs. They may require care beyond what you can provide on your own. Becoming aware of community resources and care options – from home care services to residential care – can make the transition easier. So will the support and assistance of those around you.



Resources

Support Groups

- > **Columbus Area Support Group**
(Caregiver Only)
4th Monday of the month | 1:30 p.m.
Columbus Community Center
3111 19th St., Columbus, NE
- > **Grand Island Support Group**
(Caregiver Only)
1st Wednesday of the month | 10:30 a.m.
Grand Generation Center
304 E 3rd St., Grand Island, NE
- > **Kearney Support Group**
(Caregiver Only)
2nd Tuesday of the month | 6:30 p.m.
Faith United Methodist Church
1623 Central Ave., Kearney, NE

Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline

Talk to a free dementia expert with the 24/7 Helpline at 800.272.3900. Help is available any time, day or night. Get confidential emotional support, crisis assistance, local resources and information in over 200 languages.

Helpful Websites

Alzheimer's Association: alz.org

Alzheimers.gov: alzheimers.gov

Family Caregiver Alliance: caregiver.org

Information courtesy Alzheimer's Association

