

Agitation & Anxiety

In those with dementia



Anxiety and agitation can be a symptom of the disease itself, or it can be caused by frustration or confusion. No matter the cause it can be scary for caregivers.

What causes agitation or anxiety in those with dementia?

- Damage to certain parts of the brain
- Pain or illness
- Overstimulation
- Lack of ability to communicate effectively
- Being faced with tasks that are too difficult
- A new or confusing environment
- Confusion over time, place, or relationships

Signs of anxiety and agitation

- Pacing, fidgeting, or wringing hands
- Shortness of breath, dizziness, fast or irregular heartbeat, nausea, or diarrhea
- Sleep problems
- Verbally lashing out
- Crying
- Repetitively stating concerns, such as "I want to go home."
- Need for constant reassurance
- Repetitive behaviors, such as hoarding

If you are concerned

- Attempt to determine what is triggering the behavior.
- Assess for pain or injury.
- Focus on the person's feelings rather than their actions or words.
- Be positive and reassuring.
- Adapt the environment to be more peaceful.
- Try using music, exercise, or another activity the person may find relaxing.
- Redirect to another activity.
- Speak calmly and quietly.
- Ensure both the person with dementia and yourself are safe. Seek help from others if necessary.
- Listen to the person's frustrations and reflect them back to them.
- Avoid arguing or trying to convince the person they are wrong.
- If this behavior occurs regularly, discuss it with the person's physician.
- If possible, take a break from the situation yourself.
- Avoid caffeine and alcoholic beverages.