

Caregiver Assistance News

"Caring for You - Caring for Others"

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence,
Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



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Wandering with Alzheimer's Disease

One of the most troubling aspects of Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is the person's tendency to wander away from home. There is no way to predict who will wander or when it might happen. However, some of the reasons can be pain or restlessness, side effects of medication, a noisy or stressful environment, an attempt to meet basic needs (finding the toilet), or trying to meet former obligations to job or family.

Wandering may also be a natural release for boredom or agitation. If this is the reason, wandering within a safe confined space may be encouraged. When faced with episodes of wandering, try to find their cause.



Reduce the Chance of Wandering

You cannot always prevent wandering, but you can do many things to reduce the chances it will happen.

- Provide opportunities for exercise. Exercise might include singing, rhythmic movements, walking at an indoor mall, or dancing. Develop areas indoors and outdoors where the person can explore and wander independently and safely.
- Reduce noise and confusion, particularly at mealtimes.
- Clearly label bathrooms, living rooms, and bedrooms with large letters or pictures. Try attaching a yellow strip of plastic, symbolizing caution, across doors to prevent wanderers from entering or leaving the room. Place a large NO on doors.
- Camouflage doors by painting exit doors the same color as the walls or cover doors with curtains. Place a full-length mirror on doors to the outside. Some people will turn around when they see the image, not recognizing themselves.
- Install electronic alarms or chimes on windows and doors.
- Monitor medication for changes, especially anti-depressants or anti-anxiety drugs.
- Determine whether wandering is related to previous lifestyles. Find out how the person coped with change and stress and learn about patterns of physical exercise and lifetime habits, both at home and at work. (Did the person always react to an argument by going out and walking for an hour? Did they always jog in the afternoon?) Have a plan of action if wandering occurs.

Preparing for a Safe Return

Prevention is the best cure, but if you can't prevent your loved one from wandering, here is a checklist of things that will make it easier for them to be found.

- Note what the person is wearing each day.
- Have photos available to give to the police and searchers.
- Have information on age, height, weight, hair and eye color, physical disabilities, and other identifying features.
- Know if the person has any medical problems or takes medication.
- Note the person's favorite places to go, "hang outs," and familiar sites.
- Put bells on the doors to alert you when they are opened.
- Be aware of nearby hazards such as bodies of water, dense foliage, construction sites, high cliffs, steep stair ways, high balconies, busy roads, fences, and gates.
- Know if the person can use a bus or a taxi.
- Keep unwashed clothing or wipe clean cotton balls on the person's face or arm. Put the balls in individual Ziploc bags, and store them in the freezer. Tracking dogs can use them to pick up a scent.

When the missing person is found, call the police and the Safe Return program (800-572-1122).

Source: Alzheimer's Association

Safe Return Program - If you are the authorized caregiver or a family member, you can register the person in your care with the Alzheimer's Association's Safe Return Program. The Alzheimer's Association, in collaboration with MedicAlert® Foundation, provides membership plans with 24/7 Wandering Support. Call 800-432-5378 or visit www.alz.org/safereturn for details.

Getting started is easy: choose your medical ID and engrave it with the most critical info and select a membership plan that best suits your needs. Enjoy peace of mind knowing you or your loved one are protected with MedicAlert. Products are mailed in six to eight weeks. Having the identifying information and a picture stored in a national database will increase chances of finding someone even if they refuse to wear the bracelet.

Interested in a Telephone Support Group for Caregivers?

The Caregiver Support Program at the Area Agency on Aging District 7 is planning to start a free telephone support group for caregivers.

If you are interested, please call Vicki Woyan by May 15th at the AAA7 for more details.
Vicki can be reached at:

1-800-582-7277, extension 215.



TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Hobbies are Good for You

Research suggests that how you spend leisure time matters to your health, and that your hobbies are good for you in many ways. People who scored higher on the enjoyable activities test had lower body mass index, smaller waists, lower blood pressure, lower stress hormones, and better overall physical function. Between caregiving and work, you may have little time or energy left for hobbies. But without them, life feels mundane. Squeeze them in, even if it's for just a few minutes at a time, because those moments improve your mood and your mind-set. When you're really engaged in a hobby you love, you lose sense of time and enter what's called a flow state—and that restores your mind and energy. Making time for enjoyable activities stimulates parts of the brain associated with creative and positive thinking. Spending more time on hobbies associated with having a larger and more diverse social network is a key factor in healthy aging.



Memory Care

Your schedule may be overwhelming, but the person in your care is on their own schedule. Allow more time than usual for simple tasks. Too many activities at once can provoke a negative reaction because the person feels overwhelmed.

COVID-19 Information and Resources

Find helpful information about the coronavirus (COVID-19) on the Area Agency on Aging District 7's website. The AAA7 is updating information on our website and social media Facebook page to supply you with important and helpful resources to keep you and your family informed during these times. The AAA7 remains open with our phone line to assist you and your loved ones with questions and information. You can call us Monday through Friday from 8:00 am until 4:30 pm or e-mail at info@aaa7.org. On our website, you can find helpful information at www.aaa7.org - under the "Happening Now" section, click on "COVID-19 Information and Resources." Information also includes tips for caregivers. Stay Well!

Census 2020: Everyone Counts —

This year, there are four options to completing the Census - online, by phone, by mailing a paper questionnaire, or by responding in person. Depending on how likely your area is to respond online, you have either received an invitation encouraging you to respond online, or an invitation with a paper questionnaire. These invitations were sent from the Census Bureau starting in March. Additional reminders have been sent since to encourage participation. There is still time to complete your Census if you have not yet done so!

Participating in the Census is a part of our civic duty and important to make sure our district has fair representation and appropriate funding based on our population. For more information, log onto www.census.gov or call 1-800-923-8282



Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

F32-URG, PO Box 500 • 160 Dorsey Drive • Rio Grande, OH 45674-0500

Toll-Free Number: (800) 582-7277 • TTY: 711 (Relay Ohio)

Website: www.aaa7.org • E-Mail: info@aaa7.org • Facebook: www.facebook.com/AreaAgencyOnAgingDistrict7

Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs.

The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at info@aaa7.org.

What Happens When Someone with Alzheimer's Disease Wanders

- Of those with Alzheimer's Disease or a related dementia, 59% will get lost, usually while doing normal activities.
- Of those not located within 24 hours of the last time seen, 46% may die, usually succumbing to cold and thirst.
- Individuals with Alzheimer's Disease usually do not cry out for help or respond to shouts; they leave few physical clues.
- They usually travel less than one-tenth of a mile.
- They may try to travel to a former residence, work place, or city.
- They are usually found a short distance from a road or an open field; 63% are found in a creek or drainage area or caught in briars or bushes.
- Most wandering incidents occur during normal daily activities (while trying to locate a restroom, gift shop, recreation room, etc.).

Refer back to Page 1 of this month's newsletter to read tips on how to reduce the chance of wandering.

