



## ***The Facts About...***

### **Wandering and Dementia**

Anyone who has memory problems and is physically able to walk could be at risk of wandering. Six out of 10 people living with dementia will wander at some time. It can happen during any stage of the disease.

#### **What is Wandering (Walking About)?**

The Alzheimer's Society rejects the term 'Wandering' because it implies that there is purposelessness in the activity.

It points out that many people living with dementia may go 'walking about' for what is, in their own minds, a perfectly good reason.

#### **Why Does Someone Walk About?**

One of the first considerations in dealing with 'walking about' is to understand why the person is doing it.

Gently asking the person who is walking about, or who has just returned from a walk, questions such as;

- Where were you/are you going?
- Were you/are you looking for something?
- Did you/do you need something? (e.g. the loo, a glass of water)

Understanding why they are walking around can help to identify the trigger for the behaviour; however be conscious of the fact that they may be confused and not really able to describe why they are walking around, or where they were going.

#### **Common Triggers for Walking About**

They are following an old routine (e.g. doing the school run, going to work, working in the garden).

They may be looking for someone who has died or something that they think they have misplaced.

They are restless or bored.

## **Preventing Walking Around**

Make doors less attractive and obvious to people living with dementia; paint the same colour as the walls and/or cover with a curtain.

Place a dark rug in front of the door (some people living with dementia see the rug as a dark hole which they do not want to fall into).

Keep coats, keys and outdoor 'kit' out of sight.

## **Alarms and devices**

Range of door alarms, GPS tracking devices and camera systems: <http://www.unforgettable.org>

Some Carers may feel uncomfortable about surreptitious surveillance. Others may find these devices an invaluable way of allowing them to feel safe enough to leave the person living with dementia alone for short periods of time.

## **What to Do If Someone Has Gone Walk About?**

Call 999 as soon as you realise that someone living with dementia is missing. Prompt action is very important; the police will treat your call as urgent.

Have several copies of a recent, close-up photograph of the person to give to the police and anyone else who might be searching for them.

Have a written description of the person to pass onto the police. Include details of their appearance, clothing worn and any medication they might be taking.

Keep a list of places that the person may have worked, lived, visited frequently or socialised as they often try to head back to places they have known.

If the person has been reported as missing before, inform the local police. A record of the person will already exist and can be updated, saving police time and enabling a faster search.

When the person returns, keep calm and try not to show them that you have been worried. If they have been lost, they may be feeling anxious themselves. Reassure them and quickly get them back into a familiar routine.

## Support services

### Helpline:

- Call Dementia UK's Helpline on **0800 888 6678** or send an email to [helpline@dementiauk.org](mailto:helpline@dementiauk.org)

### Online Communities:

- Alzheimer's Society has an online community called Talking Point Forum. <https://forum.alzheimers.org.uk/>
- Dementia Awareness. Every Day is a Facebook group

### Support groups:

- Find a support group in your area through Young Dementia UK <https://www.youngdementiauk.org/support-across-uk>
- Dementia Aware support group (Facebook)
- Dementia Alliance International is a weekly online peer-to-peer support groups. For more information email [info@infodai.org](mailto:info@infodai.org)
- Dementia support group for under 21's (Facebook) <https://www.facebook.com/dementiasupportu21?fref=ts>
- Dementia Mentors offer virtual memory cafes. This is a virtual social gathering for those living with dementia. [dementiamentors@gmail.com](mailto:dementiamentors@gmail.com)

## To contact Share and Care Homeshare:

Tel: **020 3865 3398** or **020 8405 6316**

E-mail: [info@shareandcare.co.uk](mailto:info@shareandcare.co.uk)

Website: [www.shareandcare.co.uk](http://www.shareandcare.co.uk)

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This fact sheet should only be used as a guideline and we recommend you seek professional advice.