

Anxiety



WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?

People with Alzheimer's or dementia might have changes in their brains that make it harder to:

- process what is going on around them
- remember that they just did something like checking their wallet for money
- understand what is going on when it gets darker (sundowning)
- feel safe when their home may no longer look familiar to them
- recognize family members or the person is who is caring for them

People with Alzheimer's or dementia can have anxiety which can make them worry or feel nervous. It may cause other behaviors such as pacing or picking at clothing or hair. This feeling of fear can cause the person to check things over and over again, or they may feel worried that something bad is going to happen.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

WAYS TO HELP

- be comforting — consider a hug or place your hand on the person's arm
- respond to the person's feelings, not only to what they say
- try not to argue or convince them of the truth
- remind the person that they're safe and you are there to help
- be an active listener — make eye contact, express interest in what they are saying
- try to distract them with a walk or something they enjoy

HOW TO PREVENT ANXIETY FROM GETTING WORSE

- follow a routine for the day
- be matter of fact and comforting about what is causing them fear
- look for signs that they are becoming fearful and try not to let it get worse by waiting to act
- try to identify what is causing the anxiety and try to remove it before it causes the worry or behavior

OTHER IDEAS TO TRY

- make sure they get enough exercise as this can be calming
- speak in a calm, gentle voice
- try using calming smells such as lavender oil or relaxing music
- reduce or limit drinks that have caffeine like coffee and soda
- track when/where anxiety occurs to look for patterns
- ask the doctor if any of their medications can cause anxiety

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- slow down and try to relax — your stress can add to the anxiety
- accept that some behaviors may make sense to the person but not to you
- take a break from caregiving so you are better able to cope with the stress
- practice deep breathing or other simple relaxing exercises
- join a support group or speak with a therapist



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