



Why People with Dementia Wander

People with dementia often wander due to a combination of factors, including memory loss, confusion about their surroundings, a desire to find something familiar, restlessness, anxiety, boredom, pain, or the need to fulfill a past routine. This behavior may lead them to walk around aimlessly, even when they don't have a specific destination in mind. They might be searching for someone or something from their past, trying to "go home" even if they are already there, or simply trying to escape an overwhelming environment.

Key Reasons for Wandering in Dementia Patients:

- **Memory loss:** Difficulty remembering where they are or how to get back to a familiar place.
- **Disorientation:** Feeling lost or confused in unfamiliar surroundings, even in their own home.
- **Searching for something:** Trying to find a person or object from their past.
- **Restlessness and agitation:** Feeling anxious or uncomfortable, leading to pacing or wandering.
- **Unmet needs:** Hunger, thirst, or the need to use the bathroom.
- **Environmental triggers:** Loud noises, too much stimulation, or unfamiliar people.
- **Habitual behavior:** Continuing a past routine, such as going to work or shopping.
- **Pain or discomfort:** Physical pain can trigger wandering behavior.
- **Relieving boredom:** A person may walk or pace because they don't have enough things to do or haven't been busy enough during the day. They may feel bored due to a lack of activities, such as seeing friends or going out.

Helping with Boredom:

- Try to keep the person mentally engaged and physically active. Encourage them to play games or engage in hobbies that match their interests.
- Reminiscence and creative therapies can be helpful.
- Involvement in housework or daily tasks can help the person stay active and engaged, boosting their self-esteem and confidence.
- Keep in mind that activities may need to be adapted to the person's abilities, and they may not want to engage in them for long periods.

Important Points to Remember About Wandering:

- **Can be dangerous:** Wandering can lead to getting lost, falling, or being exposed to the elements.

- **Requires careful management:** Caregivers need to understand the reasons behind wandering and implement safety measures like door alarms and monitoring systems.
- **Individualized approach:** Each person with dementia may have different reasons for wandering, so it's important to observe their behavior and address underlying needs.