



could be hiding or throwing away the mail. If that's happening, you may want to redirect all their mail to a post office box or a trusted relative or friend's house.

- **Look for triggers** - Sometimes a person with dementia might start rummaging in response to a triggering event. Maybe they do it at a certain time each day, when they get bored, or they're agitated.

You may find that sticking to a regular daily routine helps because it gives structure and rhythm to the day. That reduces the uncertainty and anxiety that could trigger rummaging.

- **Make commonly used items easy to find** - Your loved one might have a valid reason for rummaging. They could be looking for a specific item, but can't find it and can't explain what they're looking for. Helping them see or locate commonly used items could help. You could put things in clear containers or specific drawers and label the contents.

Source: DailyCaring.com

Managing Dementia Rummaging Behavior

Dementia or Alzheimer's disease can cause seniors to rummage through belongings. Your loved one may repeatedly dig through drawers and cabinets or search rooms over and over again. They might take items from one place, hide them all over the house, and then get upset when they can't find those things. Or, they might repeatedly re-organize things.

As disruptive or annoying as this can be, the important thing to remember is that the dementia is causing the behavior. Your loved one isn't doing it on purpose to bother you or create more work.

Understanding what's causing this behavior helps you respond without causing arguments. That minimizes conflicts, which makes life easier and less stressful for both of you.

Rummaging is a coping mechanism for the disorientation that dementia causes. The person with dementia is usually trying to reassure themselves that familiar items are still there or are trying to fulfill a need, like eating when hungry or doing something useful.

Attempting to get someone to stop rummaging or re-organizing can cause them to become increasingly agitated, paranoid, and determined to do it. Instead, manage the behavior so it's safer and less disruptive.

- **Protect valuable and important documents** - Your loved one's rummaging behavior might stress you out because they could lose or destroy items or important papers. The best solution is to remove anything of value or importance and lock them safely away.

This could include jewelry, legal or financial documents, checkbooks, credit cards, or keys. You could even replace some items with fakes so your loved one won't notice they're gone. Another concern is that the person



Central Ohio Chapter

Fairfield County

Alzheimer's
Caregiver Support Group

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Wednesday, April 10

2:00-3:00pm

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To register, please call Linda at
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740-681-5050, ext. 119

Walk-In Hours at Meals on Wheels

Wednesday, April 24 • 10am - 12pm

Have your questions about caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's answered by

Lindsay Blackburn

Alzheimer's Association - Central Ohio Chapter

People with Alzheimer's Disease May Repeat The Same Thing Over and Over

Alzheimer's disease and other dementias cause problems with short-term memory which lead to repetitive behaviors. When your loved one asks the same question or repeats the same things over and over, this can lead to a major source of stress for family caregivers.

Your loved one isn't doing it on purpose to annoy you. They truly aren't aware that they're repeating themselves the second or tenth time. It's sometimes challenging to respond to the repetitive questioning without eventually snapping or letting the frustration show in your voice.

• **Why do people with dementia repeat themselves?** - In addition to short-term memory loss, potential causes of repetitive questioning include stress, anxiety, frustration, discomfort, and fear. A person with Alzheimer's disease is often unsure of what's happening, where they are, or what time of day it is. Those are pretty unsettling feelings.

If they're feeling uncomfortable or in pain, they may not be able to clearly express their needs. So, when your loved one is repeating the same thing over and over, they're not necessarily asking because they want an answer. They may be asking because they're feeling stressed or anxious and need reassurance or to have a physical need met.

• **Keep your answers brief** - Keeping your response as short and simple as possible tends to work best. It saves time and energy and reduces your exasperation

• **Distract with an activity** - Sometimes the only way to get someone with dementia to stop the repetitive questioning is to distract them with something they enjoy. That could mean offering a snack or favorite beverage. You could also ask them to help you with a simple task they can still do, like folding some laundry.

• **Escape for a few minutes** - It's sometimes tough to keep your cool and not snap at your loved one. We're all human and everyone's patience wears thin. Go outside and get a breath of fresh air, or listen to your favorite song. When you come back, you'll have had a little time to cool off and will be better able to handle your loved ones repetitive behavior with greater kindness.

Source: DailyCaring.com

Some Dos and Don'ts for Visiting Someone with Dementia

To help everyone have a positive experience when visiting someone with Alzheimer's or dementia, a little advance preparation goes a long way. You can set visitors up for success by sharing some do's and don'ts ahead of time and create a calm environment so your older adult can focus better.

• Limit visitors to 1 or 2 people at a time. Too many people can be overwhelming.

• Minimize distractions by keeping the environment calm and quiet. Turn off the TV or loud music and ask any non-visitors to go to another room.

Do

- Speak slowly and in short sentences with only one idea per sentence.

- Give them extra time to speak or answer questions, don't rush the conversation.

- Be okay with sitting together in silence. They may enjoy that as much as talking.

- Enter their reality. Go with the flow of the conversation even if they talk about things that aren't true or don't make sense.

- Share and discuss memories of the past. They're more likely to remember things from long ago.

Don't

- Say "do you remember?" This can cause anger or embarrassment.

- Argue. If they say something that's not correct, just let it go.

- Talk down to them. They aren't children and you should show the proper respect.

- Talk about them with other people as if they're not there.

- Assume they don't remember anything. Many people have moments of clarity.

Source: DailyCaring.com

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For additional information, call the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging (COAAA) 614-645-7705.