



## Every caregiver's situation is different.

Meals on Wheels is here to help with providing services and resources to help you navigate through your important role as a caregiver.

Caregiving can happen suddenly with an accident or disease diagnosis, or start gradually with driving your loved one to get groceries or see a doctor.

Caregiving can also happen long-distance, when you're coordinating care and services by phone or email.

We hope you will find this monthly section helpful as you care for your loved one.

## Reduce The Risk of Wandering

Alzheimer's disease causes people to lose their ability to recognize familiar places and faces. It's common for a person living with dementia to wander or become lost or confused about their location, and it can happen at any stage of the disease. Six in 10 people living with dementia will wander at least once; many do so repeatedly. Although common, wandering can be dangerous - even life-threatening - and the stress of this risk weighs heavily on caregivers and family.

The following tips may help reduce the risk of wandering and can bring peace of mind to caregivers and family members; however, these actions cannot guarantee that a person living with dementia won't wander.

- Provide opportunities for the person to engage in structured, meaningful activities throughout the day.
- Identify the time of day the person is most likely to wander (for those who experience "sundowning" this may be starting in the early evening.) Plan things to do during this time - activities and exercise may help reduce anxiety, agitation and restlessness.
- Ensure all basic needs are met, including toileting, nutrition and hydration. Consider reducing, but not eliminating, liquids up to two hours before bedtime so the person doesn't have to use and find the bathroom during the nights.
- Avoid busy places that are confusing and can cause disorientation, such as shopping malls.
- Reassure the person if he or she feels lost, abandoned or disoriented.
- Assess the person's response to new surround-



ings. Do not leave someone with dementia unsupervised if new surroundings may cause confusion, disorientation or agitation.

### Prepare Your Home

As the disease progresses and the risk for wandering increases, assess your individual situation to see which of these safety measures may work best to help prevent wandering.

- Use black tape or paint to create a two-foot black threshold in front of the door. It may act as a visual stop barrier.
- Install warning bells above doors or use a monitoring device that signals when a door is opened.
- Place a pressure-sensitive mat in front of the door or at the person's bedside to alert you to movement.
- Ask neighbors, friends and family to call if they see your loved one wandering, lost, or dressed inappropriately.

Source: Alzheimer's Association

## How to Offer Help for Senior Incontinence

Incontinence is a common condition in the United States, affecting over 13 million people. Despite how common it is, many seniors with incontinence experience anxiety, shame, and embarrassment - causing them to hide their accidents and avoid getting help. However, seeking proper solutions allows people to manage the condition, maintain comfort and healthy hygiene, and stay as independent as possible.

That's why as a caregiver, it helps to understand the emotions behind incontinence.

### Why Seniors Hide Incontinence

Many seniors have raised families and cared for others. So, needing help with something so personal can be hard to accept.

The senior might feel like they've lost dignity or independence when they aren't able to fully control their bladder, especially since accidents can be embarrassing and inconvenient.

Discussing incontinence is sometimes considered taboo, so hiding it can feel like one way for seniors to maintain control over the situation. But, this can contribute to health issues like urinary tract infections and prevent them from getting the proper care.

### Changes in Personality or Behavior

Seniors with incontinence may become depressed or withdraw and avoid their usual social activities. They might avoid leaving the house or seeing friends for fear of having an accident in public. Or, they might make an unusual number of trips to the restroom every hour - significantly more than what's typical for them.

### Changes in Wardrobe

Pay attention to your older adult's wardrobe to see if anything has changed. They might wear oversized clothing to absorb accidents or dark clothing to conceal stains. They could carry extra clothes and change several times a day.

### How to Offer Help

Instead of accusing your loved one of covering things up, be someone they can confide in and let them know you're there to help with anything they need. Speaking with them one-on-one in a place where they feel comfortable is a non-threatening way to approach the topic.

Initial conversations might end with denials, but it's important to start the discussion and let them know that you're there to support them. In time, they'll

hopefully let you know what kind of help they need.

That gives you the opportunity to suggest speaking with their doctor to find out if the incontinence could be caused by a medical issue or medication side effect. Or, to offer help to find incontinence products that are effective and comfortable.

Note: It's generally better to avoid using the word "diaper" since that can feel demeaning. Disposable underwear incontinence briefs, briefs, or pull-ups are more neutral terms that can help prevent embarrassment and reduce resistance to help.

Source: DailyCaring.com

## Opportunities for Caregivers to Share and Learn

presented by the



Central Ohio Chapter

Fairfield County  
Alzheimer's  
Care Giver Support Group

Held at The Senior Hub Library  
1515 Cedar Hill Road, Lancaster

Wednesday, August 13  
2:00-3:00pm

### Build your network of support.

Share, learn, and gain emotional support from others who are also on the journey of caring for a loved one living with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia.

To register, please call the Aging Services  
Office at 740-681-5050 option 4

Walk-In Hours at The Senior Hub  
NOT AVAILABLE IN AUGUST BUT WILL BE BACK  
IN SEPTEMBER. STAY TUNED...

Have your questions answered about caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or other dementia.

Lindsay Blackburn

Alzheimer's Association-Central OH Chapter Representative

