

Changed behaviour – anger and aggression

Information about dementia for residents, family and carers



People living with dementia often behave, think and act differently to how they used to.

Changes taking place in the brain can cause some people to behave in a way that seems angry or aggressive. They might swear, shout, make threats, hit or punch, or damage property.

This can be upsetting and frightening, including for the person themselves.

What causes behaviour that seems aggressive?

There is no single answer. People with dementia are often not able to explain what they want or what they are feeling.

They may seem angry when they are upset, uncomfortable or unwell, and no longer know what to do about it.

If a person with dementia acts in an angry way, it may be because they have a problem they need help with. This can be things like:

- being in pain
- having constipation, dehydration, or an infection
- side effects of some medicines
- feeling anxious or depressed
- being tired or having problems sleeping
- needing to use the toilet but not being able to ask for help
- feeling hungry, thirsty, hot or cold
- wearing uncomfortable clothes
- wanting to get away from a noisy or busy area
- feeling frustrated at not being able to do things they used to do easily.

Caring for someone who seems angry

- Keep to a routine that suits the person.
- Be aware of the things that upset them. Look for warning signs.
- Speak slowly and clearly, and look at the person.
- Reassure the person. Listen to what they are saying and try to understand their needs.

- Stay calm and in control. This will help the person feel safer.
- Let the person have some time alone.
- Have places to relax that are quiet.
- Do enjoyable and meaningful activities.
- Gentle touch, massage or music can be soothing.
- Regular exercise, like a gentle walk.
- A 30–40 minute nap after lunch can refresh energy.
- Try different things to calm them down.
- Look for solutions based on the person’s past life experiences.
- Make sure everyone is safe.
- Remember that the person’s anger is not personal, even though it can feel that way.

Working together

Family and carers understand the person living with dementia best.

Work together with staff to share information. This helps to develop a care plan that is centred on the person. Finding out what triggers the person’s behaviour can help to reduce it.

Talk to staff and ask questions about best dementia care.

Questions to ask staff

- Have you checked for pain, illness or infection?
- Is there a care plan in place to help staff prevent and manage angry behaviour?
- Is a dementia specialist available to be involved in care planning?



Want to know more?

Aggressive behaviour factsheet <www.fightdementia.org>

For expert advice and support contact Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Services on **1800 699 799** at any time of the day or night. Situations will be assessed free of charge. They can also make referrals to other services.

Disclaimer: This health information is for general purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for you.

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