



## WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?

*People with Alzheimer's or dementia might be:*

- afraid of falling
- feeling uneasy getting undressed in front of you
- scared or confused
- feeling helpless

# BATHING

People with Alzheimer's disease or dementia may be afraid of bathing or uneasy with having someone help them with bathing. Sometimes they worry about falling or can have trouble knowing which is the hot versus the cold water faucets.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

### Prepare the Bathroom in Advance

- make sure the room is calm and warm
- run the water so it is not too hot or too cold
- don't use bright lights if possible

### Make the Bathroom Safe

- use a non-slip mat in the tub or shower and as a bath mat
- consider a tub seat
- fill the tub with only 4 inches of water
- remove things that may be dangerous such as razors, nail clippers, hair dryer, etc.
- watch carefully – don't leave him or her alone

### Allow Time & Be Positive

- allow your person to enjoy it... if he or she finds bath time relaxing
- stay calm
- be direct... "Your bath is ready now" instead of "Do you want to take a bath?"
- give one step directions...  
"Let's wash your left arm...good!, now your other one"
- be patient... don't rush

### Be Realistic

- don't argue or get frustrated... a daily bath may be too much
- consider a sponge bath instead of a tub bath
- show what you need from them... pretend to wash your arm so that he or she can copy

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## WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?

*People with Alzheimer's or dementia might:*

- trip because of changes in balance or trouble walking
- have problems seeing clearly due to poor eyesight
- forget to turn off water, burners, ovens
- forget how to use knives, etc. or where to safely place burning objects

# KEEPING HOME SAFE

People with Alzheimer's or dementia may have trouble knowing what is dangerous or making safe decisions. By helping him or her feel more relaxed and less confused at home, you can help stop accidents.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

### Keep Things Simple

- make sure rooms are neat
- place "often used" items in the same place
- remove things that might break and aren't needed

### Look at the Floor

- remove small rugs, rugs that are thick, or rugs that might slide on floors
- don't shine or wax floors
- keep items off floors... cords, books, toys, bags, boxes, etc.
- make sure bathroom and kitchen floors are kept dry and avoid walking with wet feet
- use tables and chairs that are stable enough to lean on

### Remove Dangerous Items

- keep all medicines... vitamins, aspirin, prescriptions... in a locked box, cabinet, or drawer
- place knives, scissors, guns, sharp tools, matches, and lighters out of sight or in a locked area
- move all cleaning supplies to a high shelf or lock them away
- take off knobs from the stove and oven

### Don't Leave Him or Her Alone

- in the kitchen with the stove or oven on
- in the bathroom with water running
- anywhere with burning cigarettes, cigars, or pipes
- near an open or unlocked door or gate

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## WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?

*People with Alzheimer's or dementia might:*

- forget to take their medications
- forget that they took their medication, so they take them again and again and again
- get sick or be poisoned because the wrong pills or too many pills were taken

# MEDICATIONS

People with Alzheimer's or dementia may need help with taking their medicine. Taking too much... or too little... or not following the directions... can be dangerous.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

### Watch Closely

- make sure he or she
  - takes the right number of pills at the right times
  - follows the directions on the medication
- do not leave medications in a pill box or cup on the counter
- do not leave him or her alone to take their medicine

### Lock Away Medicine

- make sure all medications are out of sight and out of reach

### Talk to ALL the Doctors

- do not stop giving any medicine without asking the prescribing doctor first
- bring all medicines in a bag or box to every doctor
  - include vitamins, herbs, teas, creams, and other pills from the drugstore
- ask the doctor if medicines can be mixed into foods or drinks
  - this is helpful if you are having trouble getting your person to take their pills

**NOTE: If you notice sudden changes like violent behaviors or trouble with bathroom accidents, call the doctor.**

- these changes could be caused by a reaction to a medication or a new illness

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## **WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?**

*People with Alzheimer's or dementia might:*

- be confused by
  - new places or people
  - something they see and don't know
- become frustrated because they can't
  - pull on a sweater
  - open a door
  - find a lost item like a purse, wallet or glasses
- be frightened or scared of
  - the shower or bath
  - a new place or person

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# **ANGER, FRUSTRATION & FIGHTING**

People with Alzheimer's or dementia can get confused, depressed, and angry. Their feelings and actions are sometimes hard for them to control.

They may hit and yell.

Don't take their words or actions personally.

Listen to what they mean, not what they are saying.

## **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

### **Keep Things Simple**

- try to match tasks and what you expect with what your person can do
- keep your home quiet and calm when you can
- speak slowly and try not to say too much at one time

### **Make a Change**

- offer a treat like a cookie or some ice cream
- lead your person to a different room
- offer to watch a TV show or listen to music
- ask a question about a topic your person enjoys

### **Be Safe**

- remove or lock away all weapons (guns, knives, etc.)
- back away slowly if the behavior is scary
- call 911 if you are afraid for your or someone else's safety



## **WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?**

*People with Alzheimer's or dementia might:*

- be confused... mainly in the afternoon or evening
- feel fearful ... home may not seem the same
- try to go somewhere they used to go often... work, church, etc.
- attempt to get away from noise or too much activity
- be bored – not having anything to do
- have a reaction to a new medicine

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# GETTING LOST

People with Alzheimer's disease or dementia can get lost outside of their home. Sometimes they wander away in a public place. They may go for a walk or to the store and not be able to find their way home. They may not remember their address or phone number.

Getting lost is scary and can be dangerous.

## **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

### **Be Prepared**

- get a MedicAlert+SafeReturn® bracelet for your person with dementia
- sew or write his or her name and your phone number onto clothes
- don't leave him or her alone near an unlocked door
- ask your neighbors to keep an eye out and to tell you if they see your person with dementia outside alone or walking away from home
- help him or her exercise during the day... take a walk or dance to music
- put away purses, coats, keys, sunglasses... things that might make your person think about leaving
- close the curtains so he or she doesn't think about going outside

### **Make Home a Safe Place**

- put child-proof locks on doors, gates, and windows
- place locks very high or low so your person with dementia can't see or reach the locks
- place a bell on doors, gates, or windows so you know if they are opened

### **Be Comforting**

- offer food or do something that will take his or her mind off wanting to leave
- ask for help... folding clothes, making dinner, etc.
- sit quietly with him or her... listen to music or watch a TV show



## WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?

*Your person with Alzheimer's or dementia might be:*

- having a reaction to medicine
- taking the wrong amount of medicine
- going through changes in the brain due to the disease

# HALLUCINATIONS

People with Alzheimer's or dementia can sometimes hear, see, smell, taste, or feel something that is not really there. They may talk to someone from the past who is no longer in the home or even still alive or is a pretend friend. This can alarm family and friends.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

### See a Doctor

- visit the doctor to find out the cause (bring ALL medications with you)
- tell the doctor about every time you think this has happened (keep a log — day, time, and what was going on around the person with Alzheimer's or dementia)

### Think About the Cause

- change the possible reason
  - if the person doesn't know who is in the mirror, cover the mirror
  - if things come out in the dark, turn on the lights or use a nightlight
  - if the TV or radio is confusing or scary, turn it off

### Be Reassuring

- say things like "don't worry, I'm here and will take care of you"
- agree, don't argue, about whether what's happening is real... it is real to them
- involve him or her in something pleasant to distract them

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