



Changed Behaviour– anger and aggression

Information about dementia for people living in or visiting the residential aged care facility.

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

Changes taking place in the brain can cause the person to behave in a way that seems angry or aggressive.

They might swear, shout, make threats, hit, punch or damage property.

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

What causes behaviour that seems aggressive?

People with dementia are often unable to explain what they want or what they are feeling. They may seem angry when they are upset, uncomfortable or unwell, and don't know what to do about it.

If a person with dementia acts in an angry or aggressive way, it may be because they have a problem, they need help with, like:

- being in pain
- being constipated
- have an infection
- experiencing a side effect of a medication
- feeling frustrated, 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 clothing or footwear
- wanting to get away from a noisy or busy area
- feeling frustrated at not being able to do things they once could do.

Caring for someone who seems angry

Try these strategies to support a person so they don't become angry or aggressive.

- Keep to a routine that suits the person.
- Be aware of the things that upsets them. Look for warning signs.
- Speak slowly and clearly and look at the person when speaking.
- 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 activities that are enjoyable and meaningful to the person.
- Gentle touch, massage or music can be soothing and relaxing.
- Regular exercise, such as walking.
- A 15–30minute early afternoon nap may refresh energy levels.
- Try different things to assist the person to calm down.
- Look for solutions based on the person’s life experiences.
- Make sure everyone is safe.
- The same solution will not work all the time.
- Remember that the person’s anger is not personal, even though it may feel that way.

Working together

You, your family, and friends are important members of the care team and understand the person living with dementia best.

Working together with staff to share information is important as it will help the care team to develop a care plan that is centred on the person and improve the care that is provided

If you have questions about the care or topics like dementia, please talk to the staff and ask questions about care.

Questions to ask staff

- Have you checked for pain, illness, or infection?
- Have you noticed any other changes in the person?
- Is the person becoming angry/aggressive more frequently?
- Is there a behaviour support plan in place to help staff prevent and manage anger and aggression?
- Is a dementia specialist available to be involved in care planning?



Want to know more?

Read the Dementia Australia [aggressive behaviour factsheet](https://www.dementia.org.au/sites/default/files/helpsheets/Helpsheet-ChangedBehaviours07-AggressiveBehaviours_english.pdf) <https://www.dementia.org.au/sites/default/files/helpsheets/Helpsheet-ChangedBehaviours07-AggressiveBehaviours_english.pdf>.

For expert advice and support contact National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**. The helpline is free, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

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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Available from the [Department of Health residential aged care information web page](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/residential-aged-care/participating-with-consumers)

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