

Living Well with Dementia

Caregiver Tips on Anxiety & Nervousness



What could be causing this behavior?

- Changes in the brain may cause anxiety and nervousness. Additionally, the feeling of being lost or losing a possession can increase anxiety. Distractions, redirections and reassurance may be all you can provide
- Medications can occasionally help with the feeling of being overly anxious or nervous, but this should be considered as one of the last options to avoid additional side effects from medications.

Common causes of anxiety & nervousness:

- Moving in with a caregiver or to a nursing care facility.
- Environmental changes (such as hospitalizations or having house guests).
- Changes with caregiver (frequent or new caregivers).
- Being bored and under stimulated.
- Unexpected changes in daily routine.
- Loss or misplacement of a possession.

An individual living with dementia may seem overly worried, anxious or nervous. They may become anxious enough that they begin to pace or even pick at their skin. Chances are, the individual won't be able to tell you why they feel the way they do.

How You Can Help

Preventing Anxiety

- **Create a calming environment** by eliminating additional stressors.
- **Tasks and routines** should be made as simple as possible for the person to understand and complete.
- **Reduce potential triggers** such as background noises or too many people in small settings.
- **Participate in an exercise activity** such as dancing, gardening or walking.

Responding to Anxiety

- **Listen** to what they have to say.
- **Modify the environment** by minimizing loud noises and distractions.
- **Speak calmly**, using a gentle voice.
- **Track** episodes of anxiety to see if you can determine what the cause is.
- **Follow up with the doctor** to see if any of the medications being taken could be causing additional anxiety.

For more information about caregiver tips or program availability through Living Well with Dementia, please contact Easterseals Homemakers & Health Services at 603.335.1770.