

# Wandering



## What is Wandering?

When someone has memory loss or dementia, it can be easy to become disoriented and confused, even in familiar places.

Wandering is common among those with dementia and can be dangerous if ignored.

If an individual with memory loss leaves a safe place or becomes lost, **contact 911** immediately.

A missing person with dementia is considered to be “at risk” and should receive law enforcement response right away; there is no need to wait 24 hours as in other situations with a missing adult.

## Understand Wandering

Everyone with memory loss is at risk for wandering. The disease can cause many changes in the brain, including difficulty recognizing people and places, inability to know what is real vs. imagined, difficulty remembering important facts (like name and address) and more.

Wandering can be caused by:

- **Searching:** People who wander are often looking for something or someone familiar, especially if they have recently moved to a new environment. In other cases, they may be trying to satisfy a basic need, such as hunger, thirst or the need to use the bathroom but have forgotten what to do or where to go.
- **Escaping:** Wandering can be the result of stress, anxiety or too much stimulation, such as multiple conversations, a loud television or visitors in the home.
- **Reliving the past:** If wandering occurs at the same time every day, it may be linked to a lifelong routine or responsibility, such as going to/from work, picking up children, etc.
- **Self-soothing:** Some individuals may feel the need to constantly stay in motion. They may be restless, make repetitive movements or pace.

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## Reduce the Risk of Wandering

Consider these strategies to minimize the risk of injury:

- **Increase physical activity:** Additional activity during the day may reduce the tendency to get up and walk around during the night (when wandering often happens).
- **Identify potential causes for wandering:** It could be simple causes such as boredom, discomfort, hunger or need to use the bathroom.
- **Increase home safety measures:** Consider “safe-proofing” the home, such as installing motion sensor alarms or a chime that signals open doors, motion-detecting lights, locks on doors/windows that can’t be opened easily, night lights, etc.
- **Provide visual cues:** People may forget where they are, even in their own home. It can help to post signs or photos on cabinets and doors to rooms, such as the bedroom and the bathroom.
- **Be aware of the environment:** Avoid busy places such as airports or shopping malls. Be aware of indoor noise that might be overstimulating, such as children or a loud TV. Remove items that suggest leaving, such as shoes and keys by the door.

*-- Talk with an Alzheimer's San Diego Clinical Care Coach --  
for a complete list of home safety tips.*

## Wandering Assistance Programs

**Take Me Home:** The registry gives law enforcement quick access to critical information about a registered person with disabilities in case of an emergency. [www.sdsheiff.net](http://www.sdsheiff.net)

**MedicAlert:** A 24-hour nationwide emergency response service for individuals with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia who are at risk for wandering or having a medical emergency. [www.medicalert.org](http://www.medicalert.org)

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## GPS & Technology Options to Reduce the Risk of Wandering

### Personal Emergency Response Systems and GPS Locators

*Devices vary from simple tracking to personal emergency response with one-button assistance, geo-fencing, two-way voice communication\* and fall detection.*

- **\*Lively** [www.lively.com](http://www.lively.com) (\$49.99 + \$19.99/mo)
- **Yepzon** [www.yepzon.com](http://www.yepzon.com) (\$129 + \$5.00/mo)
- **Take Along Tracker** [www.portable-gps-devices.com](http://www.portable-gps-devices.com) (\$149 + \$25/mo)
- **\*GoSafe** [www.lifeline.philips.com](http://www.lifeline.philips.com) (\$149 + \$64.95/mo)
- **Pocketfinder** [www.pocketfinder.com](http://www.pocketfinder.com) (\$159 + \$12.95/mo)
- **\*First Response System** [www.firstresponsesystem.com](http://www.firstresponsesystem.com) (\$50 + \$44.99/mo)
- **iTraQ** [www.itraq.com](http://www.itraq.com) (\$149 + \$5.90/mo)
- **Trax Play** [www.traxfamily.com](http://www.traxfamily.com) (\$179 device & 1 yr data)
- **Spot Gen3** [www.findmespot.com](http://www.findmespot.com) (\$169.95 + \$19.99/mo)

### GPS Watches and Wristbands

*GPS-enabled watches and wristbands that track location information. Prices and fees vary.*

- **Senior GPS Bracelet** [www.tracking-system.com/senior-gps-bracelet](http://www.tracking-system.com/senior-gps-bracelet)
- **Tracking System Direct** <https://www.trackingsystemdirect.com/senior-gps-bracelet/>
- **AlzStore** <https://www.alzstore.com/gps-tracker-watch-elderly-p/0950.htm>
- **Mind Care Products** <https://www.mindcaresstore.com/gps-locator-watch-triloc-p/mc-0900.htm>

**GPS SmartSole** [www.gpssmartsole.com](http://www.gpssmartsole.com), GPS insole that can be inserted into almost any shoe. Includes wireless charger and tracking application for cell phone. (\$299 + \$30-\$50/month)

**Safe Wander** [www.safewander.com](http://www.safewander.com), small wearable sensor that sends an alert to a mobile device when it detects the person getting up or walking away. Kit includes sensor, a gateway and charger. (Free download of phone app, \$199)

**Phone Applications ("apps")** Real time GPS tracking abilities through a smart phone, such as Life360 or FollowMee. Many available, most at no cost. Visit your phone's app store or speak with your cell phone provider.