

Information on Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, current research, individual care and assistance for caregivers is available from the Chapter. For more information, please call:

**24/7 Helpline: 800.272.3900**

**[www.alz.org/midlands](http://www.alz.org/midlands)**

## alzheimer's association® Midlands Chapter

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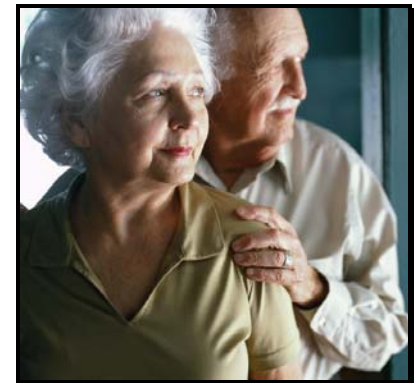


## alzheimer's association® Midlands Chapter

## Recognizing Pain



Recognizing Pain  
in the Person  
with Dementia

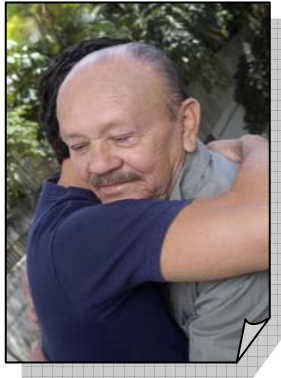


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All day. Every day.**

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Persons with advanced dementia cannot help themselves when pain occurs and may no longer be able to ask for help from caregivers. Their discomfort is often expressed by changes in their behaviors, which may include such things as facial grimaces, clenched fists, crying or vocalizations such as moaning and screaming out, decreased appetite, refusal to participate in usual activities, agitation and combativeness. It is up to us as caregivers to recognize these changes when they occur and assess the individual for pain and discomfort.



Some people with late stage dementia are still able to answer yes/no questions and may respond when asked, “Does something hurt you?” followed by “Can you put your hand on it?” If the person is not able to respond, the caregiver must try to observe when and where the discomfort occurs. For instance, does it occur or change intensity when the person’s position is changed? Is it here before or after meals? After urination or bowel movement?



Assessing the pain with dementia starts with knowing their past medical history, especially the presence of arthritis, osteoporosis, previous falls and injuries, past surgeries and the existence of GI disorders and other conditions that might cause flare-ups of pain or discomfort. Caregivers should also be aware that the elderly individual is at higher risk of infections, including infections of the urinary tract, which can cause burning pain upon urination. The possibility of a new acute condition such as a heart attack, gall bladder attack or appendicitis should be considered.

Look for other observable symptoms such as a tight or tender abdomen, abnormal bowel sounds or bowel movements. Look for any signs of redness or swelling. Is the person’s temperature normal? Is the person pale from perspiring? Is the person refusing to walk or get out of bed?

Too often, behavioral changes are attributed to the presence of dementia and the person is denied the opportunity of treatment for the underlying medical condition that is causing distress. Taking care and noticing behavioral changes can greatly increase the quality of life for the person with dementia while making the caregiver’s job a little easier.



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