

**Plan ▶ Prepare ▶ Share**

# A Caregiver's Guide to Wandering

**Includes:**

- Fingerprint Ink
- DNA Collection
- ID Kit





# What To Do

**W**andering is a constant concern for those who care for people with dementia and, if you're among them, *A Caregiver's Guide to Wandering* is designed expressly for you. This informative hands-on kit was created to encourage families and caregivers to take important steps to safeguard loved ones from wandering and losing their way.

The purpose of this kit is to help you keep your loved one at home longer, saving money and heartache. It was created to give you peace-of-mind as you continue to provide love and support to your loved one.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, more than 60% of people suffering from dementia are prone to wandering and may become disoriented and get lost as a result of their illness. Statistics



show that, if not found within 24 hours, up to half of those lost will suffer serious injury or death. Finding them quickly is crucial.

Planning, preparation and sharing are the key components of this guide. Inside, you will find practical suggestions for both preventing wandering episodes and for finding a lost person quickly. The personal data section of the kit allows you to capture identifying information (photo, physical description, fingerprints, DNA, medical information, medications and care providers) so that it is all in one handy location.

It is highly recommend that you take a photo of pages 7 and 9, using your smartphone, so that you have ready access to your loved one's photo and personal information that you can share immediately if needed by text, email or both.

**Plan ▶ Prepare ▶ Share**

# Step One: Plan

**M**any families and caregivers live in fear that a loved one with dementia will get lost and become so disoriented that he or she will not be able to communicate who they are or anything about themselves. Planning in advance of an emergency of this kind allows you to remain calm and take action.

## **Begin in the home.**

Take note of places in and around the home where a loved one may hide if frightened or confused, including closets, garage, basement or storage area.

## **Know the neighborhood.**

Identify potentially dangerous areas in your immediate vicinity where your loved one could wander, such as open water, swampy or wooded areas, vacant buildings or culverts. Neighbors' homes, bus shelters and shopping areas are also potential places where your loved one may wander.



## **Keep a list of phone numbers for people you can call for help.**

## **Let neighbors and friends know to call you if they see your loved one out alone.**

You may want to hand out your contact information on a pre-printed business card.

## **Keep a list of locations where your loved one may go.**

He or she may head to a previous residence, a friend or relative's home, the place they used to work, or a favorite restaurant.

## **Store a recently worn article of clothing in a sealed plastic bag.**

Your loved one's personal scent on a garment can aid law enforcement officials who use canine search teams. Touch it as little as possible and, to keep the scent fresh, replace the clothing item about once a month.

# Step Two: Prepare

**I**n order to minimize wandering and to get an idea of where to search, it's helpful to understand some of the impulses and conditions that can result in this behavior.

- Agitation and restlessness are common symptoms of dementia and may be triggered by a lack of exercise or physical or mental stimulation. Some medications can cause or heighten anxiousness.
- Memory loss leads to confusion, and the person with dementia may not realize that he or she is at home and sets out to “go home.”
- Delusional behavior can cause a loved one to believe he or she must go to work or fulfill some other daily routine from the past.
- Obsessively searching for a particular person, place or personal item that he or she believes is lost may cause someone to leave suddenly.
- Disorientation and inability to find places that should be familiar — even the bedroom or bathroom can be a concern.
- An immediate desire to escape from a real or imagined threat prompted by strange noises, unfamiliar people or even caregivers may result in a wandering episode.

If your loved one exhibits any of these beliefs or behaviors, he or she may be at risk.

**According to the Alzheimer's Association\*, more than 60% of people who suffer from dementia are prone to wandering and may become disoriented and get lost as a result of their illness.**

# Step Two: Prepare

## To Reduce the Risk of Wandering:

- Make sure your loved one's basic needs are met (e.g. hunger, thirst, toileting, etc.).
- Provide structured, meaningful activities throughout the day. If your loved one can no longer read or take part in hobbies, a repetitive activity may help. Rocking in a rocker or glider, sweeping the floor, folding clothes or other simple and familiar chores will keep your loved one busy and feeling needed.



- Provide a safe, uncluttered environment where he or she is allowed to pace inside. Eliminate rugs and obstacles to avoid tripping, colliding and falling.
  - Regular exercise may help reduce anxiety and restlessness. Walking, dancing and simple calisthenics can ease anxiety, preserve balance and promote better sleep. Before beginning these activities be sure to check with your loved one's primary care physician.
  - Deadbolt locks should be mounted above or below the line of sight on exterior doors. Window stops will prevent a loved one from opening them fully. Alarms or bells can be attached to outside doors. All of these items are available in hardware stores.
  - Keep car keys inaccessible.
  - Avoid busy and/or unfamiliar places that may be disorienting or even frightening.
- Stay close to your loved one when you are out together in new surroundings.
  - Obtain a medical identification bracelet with your loved one's name, the words "memory loss" and an emergency contact phone number.
  - Consider personal electronic tracking devices, motion detectors, electronic beepers, special latches and other security devices available from companies specializing in care-giving products for people with dementia.

# Wanderers' ID/DNA Personal Profile

## Getting Started

Once you have completed the *Wanderers' ID/DNA Personal Profile™*, you will have all the pertinent information at hand to share with law enforcement officers and others as needed. Remember to keep this completed card in a secure and accessible place. Once the ID card is filled out, take a photograph using your smartphone. That way, should you need immediate access to your loved one's identification information, you can text or e-mail it to the caregivers and first responders who are trying to help you.

**Update every 12 months. Complete using a black pen.**

Full Name				Nickname	
Sex	Birthdate	Age	Eye Color	Hair Color	Race
Blood Type (if known)		Skin Tone			
Height	Weight	Date	Height	Weight	Date
Glasses <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Hearing Aid <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Dentures <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Your Name			Relationship	Phone	
Other Contact		Phone	Other Contact		Phone

<b>Doctor/Physician's Assistant.</b> List their names and a phone number in case they need to be contacted about the patient's medicines.		
Doctor	Phone	Diagnosis
Physician's Assistant	Phone	Diagnosis

**Once you have completed this form take a photo of this page using your smartphone so that you will have ready access to share vital information as needed.**

# Wanderers' ID/DNA Personal Profile

**List of medicines.** Write the brand and generic name of each medicine, dose, how often and method (by mouth, under the tongue, injection, etc.). If the patient has stopped taking a certain medicine, draw a line through it and list the date it was discontinued. If you need extra pages, remember to write the patient's name on each one. List all tablets, patches, drops, ointments, injections, etc. Include prescription, over-the-counter, herbal, vitamin, and diet supplement products. Also list any medicine taken only on occasion or "as needed."

Brand/generic	Dose	How taken	Date discontinued
Brand/generic	Dose	How taken	Date discontinued
Brand/generic	Dose	How taken	Date discontinued
Brand/generic	Dose	How taken	Date discontinued
Brand/generic	Dose	How taken	Date discontinued
Brand/generic	Dose	How taken	Date discontinued
Brand/generic	Dose	How taken	Date discontinued
Brand/generic	Dose	How taken	Date discontinued

## Immunizations.

Tetanus Year \_\_\_\_\_
  Pneumonia Year \_\_\_\_\_
  Flu Year \_\_\_\_\_
  Hepatitis Year \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_
  Other \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

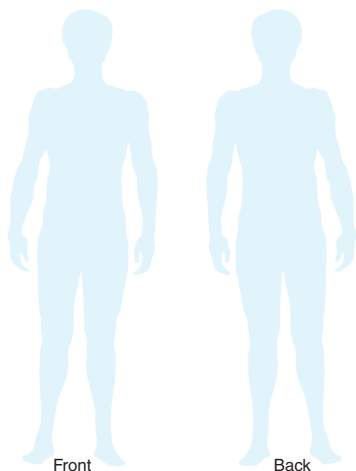
## Pharmacy.

Name	Phone	Location
Name	Phone	Location



# Wanderers' ID/DNA Personal Profile

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Indicate areas where the patient has birthmarks, distinctive moles or scars.

## Apply Photo Here

Tape, glue or staple  
recent photos here.

## DNA Collection



- Wash your hands thoroughly before beginning.
- Clip your loved one's fingernails and/or toenails and tape below.

Tape fingernails and/or  
toenails here

**Once you have completed this form take a photo of this page using your smartphone so that you will have ready access to share vital information as needed.**

# Wanderers' ID/DNA Personal Profile

**Medical Conditions.** List any health conditions such as diabetes, asthma, etc. Include any allergies or adverse side effects that the patient has experienced from medications, dyes, foods, insects, etc. Describe what happens when the patient is exposed to these triggers.




More than 5 million Americans are living with the disease.



Every 67 seconds someone in the United States develops Alzheimer's.



Alzheimer's disease is the 6th leading cause of death in the United States.



There are approximately 500,000 people dying each year because they have Alzheimer's.



1 in 3 seniors dies with Alzheimer's or another dementia.



In 2013, 15.5 million caregivers provided an estimated 17.7 billion hours of unpaid care valued at more than \$220 billion.

# Alzheimer's ID/DNA Kit

Lift Here

## How to make a good print

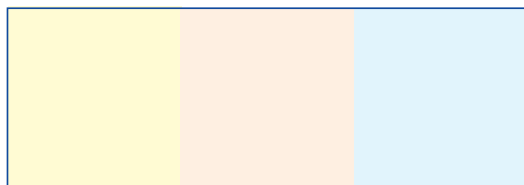
- 1 Remove the top layer of plastic.
- 2 Create practice prints in the area below. Start with one thumb or finger at a time, covering the entire fingertip with ink. Place the finger directly on the fingerprint grid and firmly roll the finger from side-to-side. Create the imprint without smudging. It is a good idea to practice a few times before you make the final prints.
- 3 Repeat process for each finger. Ink will wash off with soap and water and is not harmful if ingested.

### Sample Fingerprints

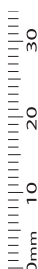


Too Light    Too Heavy    Just Right

### Practice Here



Right Thumb	Right Pointer	Right Middle Finger	Right Ring Finger	Right Pinkie



# Step Three: Share

**When someone with dementia is missing**, begin search-and-rescue efforts immediately. Ninety-four percent of people who wander are found within 1.5 miles of where they were last seen.

**Search the immediate area for no more than 15 minutes on your own.**

After that, call “911” to report that a person with dementia is missing. Provide police officers with the current picture, description and medical information from your *Wanderer’s ID/DNA Profile*.

**Enlist the help of neighbors, friends and family members** to help you search the immediate area.

**Provide canine search units** with a piece of your loved one’s clothing that you have stored in a plastic bag.

**Provide a description** of what your loved one was wearing when he or she disappeared.

**File a Missing Person’s Report** so the police will begin to search for your loved one.

## Interesting... Did You Know?

Is your loved one right or left-handed? Wandering generally follows the direction of the dominant hand, so start searching in that direction first.

## Four Steps for Your Peace of Mind...

1. Complete the *Wanderer’s ID/DNA Personal Profile*.
2. The more people you inform about your loved one’s condition and tendency to wander, the more help you can enlist in preventing him or her from getting or remaining lost.
3. If you aren’t associated with a caregiver support group, join one. It’s an important step in learning more on how to cope with dementia.
4. No matter how dedicated your care is, taking an occasional break is essential and healthy. Adult day care provides structured programs for your loved one and a break for the caregiver.

**Read more:** [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org) [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)  
[www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers](http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers) [www.houstonmethodist.org](http://www.houstonmethodist.org)

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