



Caregiver's Guide

Supporting Persons with Dementia
who Wander

Developed by:



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Please email careinmind@aic.sg if you have questions or suggestions to improve this guide.

Thank you.

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What is Wandering?

Many people with dementia feel the urge to walk about and in some cases leave their homes.

It is also sometimes termed “wandering” but despite the connotations, it is rarely ever aimless. Persons with dementia may simply not remember where they had set out to go, or what they had intended to do. They may also be unable to articulate their thoughts and motivations behind leaving the house and wandering.

Is Wandering Always Bad?

Wandering about the neighbourhood is not a problem in itself – in fact, it can be positive! It can help to relieve stress and boredom and is a good form of exercise.

Family of loved ones with dementia often feel anxious for the safety of their loved ones. As a result, they may make the difficult choice to limit the movements of their loved ones, which reduces the chance of getting lost in the community, but causes the person with dementia to feel frustrated and isolated.

Read page 7 for [some ways to better support safe wandering](#).

When Does Wandering Become a Cause for Concern?

When a person with dementia wanders about the neighbourhood, they might meet with dangerous situations along the way. For example, they may find themselves along a busy highway, or be a long way from home without their necessary medicine, food and water. Persons with dementia often experience problems with orientation, which causes difficulties in finding their way back home.

When the person with dementia is away from home for an unusually long time, or the caregiver is unable to locate his/her loved one with dementia, then wandering becomes a cause for concern.

Why Does My Loved One Wander?

There can be many reasons why persons with dementia decide to walk about or leave their homes. It is better to understand the reasons behind the behaviour, in order to come up with solutions that target the root cause of the wandering rather than finding ways to limit the movements of your loved one with dementia.

- **Continuing with a habit or routine**

- Old habits die hard – so if the person with dementia had a very specific routine or habit that they used to follow, they might want to carry on with this, even if it is something that is not appropriate or they are no longer able to do so. Hence they may try to return to their old haunts and activities e.g. go shopping or go to their old workplace because that is what they always did at that particular time and they think they should be there.

- **Boredom**

- Someone who lacks mental and physical stimulation may decide that they would like to look for something to do, which means they could wander off, or want to go for a walk.

- **Restlessness or a need to burn up energy**

- If the person with dementia used to have a very busy or active life, but is now unable to leave their home, or has a limited social life, they may have the urge to get out and about.

- **Confused**

- Ever find yourself walking into a room and then not remembering why you were in that room? This can happen more frequently for someone with dementia, so the person you are caring for may be trying to 'retrace' their steps until they remember what it was they were doing. Likewise, if they do not remember an area, they may wander off until they can start identifying something familiar like a landmark. Alternatively, they may be stuck in a

memory from their past, and be keen to return to a familiar spot – such as a house they used to live in – as they recognise it.

- **Looking for something or someone**

- Wandering may occur because they may suddenly decide to search for family or friend they have not seen for a long time or they may be wondering where they parked the car (despite not having driven for many years).

- **Trying to get away from something**

- If the situation or place they are in is painful, stressful or unpleasant in any way, they may walk off to get away from it all. If the environment is very noisy, they might walk away to find somewhere more quiet and peaceful.

- **Wandering at night**

- Wandering can happen at any time, including at night. If someone with dementia gets easily confused with the time of the day, they may start wandering at night. They may have decided that they have somewhere to be and do not understand that it is nighttime and that they should be asleep.

How Can You Reduce Unsafe Wandering or Promote Safe Wandering?

Wandering is not always a bad thing, especially if it is under a guardian's watchful eye. It can help them to work out their boredom and get some physical exercise.

- **Create a routine of daily activities**

- Having a routine can provide structure. Try to create a daily routine for your loved one with dementia.
- If you and your family members are unavailable during the daytime, consider the various community services you can use to engage your loved one. Some examples are Dementia Day Care Centres or the Eldersitter Programme. You may find the full list of services in [Living With Dementia – A Resource Kit for Caregivers](#) on the [Dementia Friends website, dementiafriendly.sg](http://dementiafriendly.sg).

- **Learn more about your loved one's routines**

- Identify the most likely times of day that wandering may occur and plan activities at that time. Activities and exercise can reduce anxiety, agitation and restlessness. You may record your observations in a schedule of his/her activities each week, which can be found on [page 13](#).

- **Address the feelings of your loved one**

- Reassure the person if he or she feels lost, abandoned or disoriented – if the person with dementia wants to leave to "go home" or "go to work", do not correct the person. Instead, try to validate their feelings or redirect the conversation. For example, you can say, "We are staying here tonight. We are safe, and I will be with you. We can go home in the morning after a good night's rest."

- **Ensure basic needs of person are met**

- Ensure all basic needs are met – has the person gone to the bathroom? Is he or she thirsty or hungry?

- **Remove triggers for unwanted wandering**

- Place locks out of sight – install either high or low on exterior doors, and consider placing slide bolts at the top or bottom.
- Keep car keys out of sight – if the person is no longer driving, remove access to car keys — a person with dementia may not just wander by foot. The person may forget that he or she can no longer drive. If the person is still able to drive, consider using a GPS device to help if they get lost.

- **Provide supervision**

- If your loved one likes to go out for walks, you can get a family member or helper to follow along and provide help if needed.
- Do not leave someone with dementia unattended in new or changed surroundings. Never lock a person in at home or leave him or her in a car alone.
- Use devices that signal when a door or window is opened – this can be as simple as a bell placed above a door or as sophisticated as an electronic home alarm. This will alert the caregiver if the person steps out of range of their watchful care.
- As much as possible, try to avoid busy places that can be confusing and might cause disorientation – shopping malls, grocery stores or other busy venues.

What Can I Do To Contribute To The Identification And Search Process?

Here are some ways to facilitate the identification and search process if your loved one needs help to find his/her way home in the future

1. Download the **Dementia Friends Mobile App** where you can report your loved one missing. The Dementia Friends App aims to enhance support for caregivers to by providing information on dementia and establish a network of Dementia Friends. These Dementia Friends will be notified of lost persons and can help to keep a look out for your loved one in the community
 - a. You may download the “Dementia Friends” mobile app on the Google Play Store or the Apple Store
 - b. Alternatively, you may make a of report your missing loved one on the website, dementiafriendly.sg
2. Get a tracking device so that it will be easier to find your loved one in the future. You may find a [list of trackers available in Singapore on Page 19 – 22](#).
3. For [other ways to facilitate identification, please refer to Page 16 – 18](#).
4. Be prepared with the following important details of your loved ones:
 - Up to date photograph
 - Personal details eg. where he/she used to stay, schools, favourite hangout areas, language spoken, distinguishing facial features eg. mole/scars, walk with limp
 - You may wish to complete this [form on Page 12 – 14](#) and have the information ready when you need it
5. [Submit identifying details to the police using this form in Page 12 – 15](#), as a pre-emptive measure
 - The following police divisions have established a workflow for caregivers to submit their loved ones’ details to facilitate the police’s identification in the event that they come across someone who is found lost/wandering

- Nee Soon GRC (Nee Soon South, Nee Soon East, Nee Soon Central, Chong Pang)
- Hong Kah North SMC
- Bukit Batok East division

6. If you live in a condominium, alert security guards to your loved one's condition with a photograph and your contact details

7. Let your neighbours know about person's condition so they can keep a lookout and inform you if they spot the person wandering alone

What Can I Do If My Loved One Goes Missing?

Please see below for a list of things to prepare and if you discover that your loved one is missing.

Preparing for the future	First 15 Min	First hour	After person with dementia is found
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Observe movements and behaviours of your loved one to get a sense of his/her daily routines. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare all the relevant info on page 12 – 14 for quick and easy access <input type="checkbox"/> Download the Dementia Friends app, which will allow you to quickly report your loved one missing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Try searching for your loved one in their favourite hangout areas <input type="checkbox"/> Ask your neighbours if they have seen your family member <input type="checkbox"/> Send a search party to look for them (if you have enough family members and neighbours) <input type="checkbox"/> Bring along the filled in form on pages 11 – 15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If you are still unable to locate your loved one, or they have been missing for some time, call 999 or go to your nearest Neighbourhood Police Post to make a police report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that your loved one is physically unhurt <input type="checkbox"/> Reassure your loved one that he/she is safe <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that all his/her belongings are still on him <input type="checkbox"/> Contact all the previous persons you've asked for help to inform them <input type="checkbox"/> Close the case on the Dementia Friends app

Throughout...

- Stay calm. It is crucial at this time that you do not blame yourself, your family members, your helper etc.
- Ensure that you remain contactable at all times

Future Precautions

- Consider additional dementia services available in the community
- Get a tracking device for your loved one. Some suggestions can be found on pages 19 – 22
- Reflect on the possible reasons for getting lost this time, and try to find solutions that can remedy this

Note: You do not need to wait 24 hours to report a loved one missing if you believe that they are living with dementia, might be in danger, have a health condition, and/or their disappearance is out of the ordinary.

Useful Information for Caregivers To Prepare Ahead

Caregivers are encouraged to pen down important information like physical description, their previous home and work address, daily routines. By having these key information updated and ready on hand will be helpful if your loved ones are found missing.

If your loved one is missing, you can submit the details as supporting documents when you file a police report to provide the police additional useful information to facilitate their search. If you intend to tap on the Dementia Friends Mobile Apps and/or social media to expand your search network, the personal information prepared ahead will also come in handy.

If you stay in Yishun, Hong Kah North or Bukit Batok East, you can submit your loved ones' details as pre-emptive measure to the neighbourhood police centres. The following police divisions have established a workflow for caregivers to submit their loved ones' details to facilitate the police's identification in the event that they come across someone who is found lost/wandering

- Yishun (Nee Soon South, Nee Soon East, Nee Soon Central, Chong Pang)
- Hong Kah North
- Bukit Batok East

Fill in the details below as much as you can. Do not feel pressured to fill in every field if there is some information you are unsure of.

Full Name		<p><i>Attach a photo here</i></p> <p><i>If possible, have an electronic photo ready as well</i></p>
Name Person responds to		
Date of Birth		
Age		
Languages and dialects spoken		

<p>Current address</p>	
<p>Previous addresses</p>	
<p>Previous employment details and addresses</p>	
<p>Places of interest or significance <i>(e.g. old schools, favourite hangout)</i></p>	
<p>Hobbies</p>	
<p>General description <i>(e.g. hair colour, height, weight)</i></p>	
<p>Distinguishing features <i>(e.g. scars, tattoos)</i></p>	
<p>Mobile Phone No. <i>(if any)</i></p>	
<p>Any money or public transport card?</p>	
<p>Physical health condition(s) and medication required?</p>	

Previous places found	
Helpful tips for approaching <i>(What should people know when trying to talk to your loved one? e.g. loves children, fearful of dogs)</i>	

Weekly habits and routines – what typically happens in a week? <i>e.g. family members visit, hospital appointment, daily walk in the park</i>			
	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Completed in advance by: _____

Relationship to the person with dementia: _____

Contact number: _____

Date: _____

Part 2 – Information to complete when person has been reported as missing

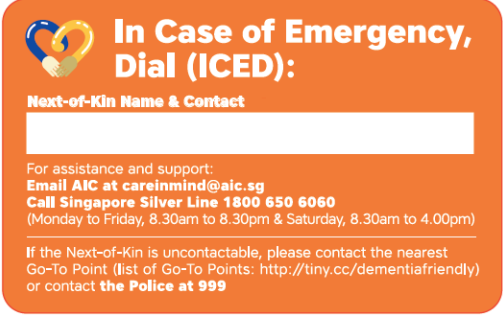
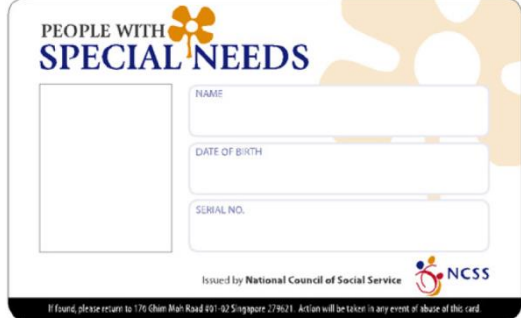

Description of what the person was last seen wearing. Include colour, designer labels, brands etc.


Shirt/Sweater	
Trousers/Skirt	
Outerwear	
Headwear	
Footwear	
Accessories <i>e.g. watch, rings</i>	
Other	


<p>Declaration and Consent</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have read and am aware of the terms stated on the right.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I agree to the collection and use of my personal particulars by the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) and its affiliated organisations for the purposes of Dementia-Friendly Singapore. • I agree to receive information on other related talks, workshops, products and/or services offered by AIC and its partners via email, mobile phone text messages, mail and/or phone calls. <i>* AIC wishes to highlight that necessary safeguard will be taken to protect the security, integrity and confidentiality of your personal particulars.</i> • The form is for the following divisions that have come on board to have caregivers submit their loved ones' details to facilitate the identification process in the event that they come across someone who is found lost/wandering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yishun • Hong Kah North • Bukit Batok East
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List of Identification Methods For Caregivers

You may choose to use more than 1 identification method for more comprehensive coverage.



No.	Method	Description	How Public Can Use This Information	Picture, for reference
1	ICE(D)	<p>Sticker provided by AIC and DFSG initiative.</p> <p>It is typically recommended to be pasted on EZ-Link card or any other small item/device the elderly frequently brings with him/her.</p> <p>This sticker is found inside our Knowing Dementia brochure. You may find them at any of our Go-To Points nationwide.</p>	Anyone who finds your loved one wandering in public will be able to contact you directly.	
2	NCSS Safe Return Card	Caregivers of persons with developmental disabilities and persons with dementia are often concerned about the safety and well-being of their wards. The Developmental Disability Registry (DDR) Identity (ID) card was introduced with the aim of helping them	Anyone who finds your loved one wandering in public will be able to contact you directly.	<p>Front of Card:</p>  <p>Back of Card:</p> 


No.	Method	Description	How Public Can Use This Information	Picture, for reference
		<p>integrate into society and live independently to the best of their ability. The information on the card will help members of the public identify and extend appropriate assistance to them, giving caregivers a better peace of mind.</p> <p>You may find out more about this scheme here: https://www.ncss.gov.sg/GatewayPages/Social-Services/Adult-with-Disabilities/Safe-Return-Card-(1)</p>		
3	Identity Card (Pink or Blue), Drivers' License	You may wish to have your loved one carry around a photocopied version of his/her IC, instead of the original copy.	The police will be able to immediately bring your loved one back home using the address stated on the card.	
4	ID-Life Tag Bio	QR code is placed on wearable or sticker. Once scanned, any person will be able to contact the person registered to the elderly.	Any person can contact you by downloading the QR code reader app.	 <p>ID-Life Sticker Label</p>

No.	Method	Description	How Public Can Use This Information	Picture, for reference
5	Writing on t-shirts and other articles of clothing	<p>You may consider using fabric markers to write identification details or contact information on the elderly's sleeves or clothes tags. Some examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact number of NOK • IC number and name of the elderly 	Anyone who finds your loved one wandering in public will be able to contact you directly.	
6	Keyring holder	Write your contact details on a ring tag, and put it with the bunch of keys that your loved one usually brings out.	Anyone who finds your loved one wandering in public will be able to contact you directly.	


Available Tracking Devices in Singapore

Note: List is not exhaustive and this is ***not*** an endorsement of product. Information is accurate as of 21 March 2018.

Vendor/ Distributor	Device	Features	Price (with GST)	Contact
Ministry of Silver Lining	 GPS SmartSole Tracker	<p>The patented GPS enabled “Smart” insoles fit easily into most shoes and let you monitor the location of loved ones who may have a tendency to wander or at risk of becoming disoriented and lost.</p> <p>You can track their location through any smartphone, tablet or web browser, set up text and e-mail alerts if they leave or enter defined areas on a map.</p>	Around \$650 <i>(subject to changes in price from seller)</i>	http://mosl.com.sg/wander-prevention/gps-smartsole-tracker.html
Pebbell		<p>The Pebbell personal safety alarm keeps you connected with loved ones. It is very small and discreet so that you can pop it in your loved one’s pocket or attach to a lanyard for those who are worried about forgetting to take it out with them.</p>	Starts from about \$250	http://www.pebbell-gps.com/

Vendor/ Distributor	Device	Features	Price (with GST)	Contact
M1	 Phones with M1 SIM cards	A mobile app has to be installed on two M1 3G mobile phones for them to be linked. Tracker will know location of linked trackee using GSM/GPS function.	Around \$2.99 per month post-paid M1 subscription <i>(subject to changes in price from seller)</i>	M1 VSafe product page https://www.m1.com.sg/Personal/Add-onServices/VSafe Call M1 Customer Service 1627

Vendor/ Distributor	Device	Features	Price (with GST)	Contact
<p>Available at popular E-shops like:</p> <p>Qoo10.sg</p> <p>Lazada.sg</p> <p>Ebay.com.sg</p>	<p>Various devices</p>	<p>Wearable products ranging from pendants, watches, keychains, armbands etc. Wearables will be tracked using a mobile app or website.</p>	<p>Prices can range from around \$40 to \$220 according to build quality, range distance, battery life and technical support etc.</p>	<p>Qoo10.sg</p> <p><a href="https://www.qoo10.sg/s/WATERPROOF-PERSONAL-GPS-TRACKER?keyword=waterproof+personal+gps+tracker&keyword=auto_change=">https://www.qoo10.sg/s/WATERPROOF-PERSONAL-GPS-TRACKER?keyword=waterproof+personal+gps+tracker&keyword=auto_change=</p> <p>Lazada.sg</p> <p><a href="https://www.lazada.sg/catalog/?q=waterproof+personal+gps+tracker&keyori=ss&from=input&spm=a2o42.home.search.go.3a7307af6qJBaB">https://www.lazada.sg/catalog/?q=waterproof+personal+gps+tracker&keyori=ss&from=input&spm=a2o42.home.search.go.3a7307af6qJBaB</p> <p>ebay.com.sg</p> <p><a href="https://www.ebay.com.sg/sch/i.html?odkw=gps+tracker&osacat=0&from=R40&trksid=m570.l1313&nkw=waterproof+personal+gps+tracker&sacat=0">https://www.ebay.com.sg/sch/i.html?odkw=gps+tracker&osacat=0&from=R40&trksid=m570.l1313&nkw=waterproof+personal+gps+tracker&sacat=0</p>

Vendor/ Distributor	Device	Features	Price (with GST)	Contact
<p>ID- Life QR Code</p>		<p>Digital ID which includes the name of the person with dementia and a dial-back mechanism to contact the next-of-kin. Caregiver can register the QR code for their loved one, so in the event that they are missing and found by passer-by, the passer-by will be able to contact the caregiver.</p>	<p>Complimentary <i>(Subject to changes from seller)</i></p>	<p>Email minseng.chew@id-life.com</p>

