



PAIN AND DEMENTIA

Research has shown that people with dementia experience pain the same way as everyone else, but they are often unable to communicate their pain to get help. They may be unable to accurately report the location, level and type of pain or to remember to regularly take pain relieving medication, meaning they are left suffering.



Look for Signs

Some of these symptoms could be caused by other things, but pain should always be considered.

- facial grimacing
- gestures that indicate distress
- guarding a particular body part
- reluctance to move
- moaning with movement
- limited range of motion or slow movement
- increased heart rate, blood pressure or sweating
- restlessness
- crying or distress
- increased or decreased vocalizations
- withdrawn social behaviour
- lethargy or increased sleep
- disrupted or restless sleep
- decreased appetite (and decreased nutritional intake)
- increased confusion
- anger, aggression, irritability or agitation
- changes in behaviour

Pain Assessment in Advanced Dementia (PAINAD) Scale

	0	1	2	score
Breathing independent of vocalization	normal	Breathing independent of vocalization	Noisy labored breathing. Long period of hyperventilation. Cheyne-Stokes respirations.	
Negative vocalization	None	Occasional moan or groan. Low level speech with a negative or disapproving quality	Repeated troubled calling out. Loud moaning or groaning. Crying	
Facial expression	Smiling or inexpressive	Sad. Frightened. Frown	Facial grimacing	
Body language	Relaxed	Tense. Distressed pacing. Fidgeting.	Rigid. Fists clenched. Knees pulled up. Pulling or pushing away. Striking out	
Consolability	No need to console	Distracted or reassured by voice or touch	Unable to console, distract or reassure.	
			TOTAL:	

Total scores range from 0 to 10 (based on a scale of 0 to 2 for five items), with a higher score indicating more severe pain (0="no pain" 10="severe pain").

Pain interventions

Medications and non-drug therapies can be effective in controlling pain for people with dementia. Studies have shown that the following non-drug therapies can reduce pain and pain related behaviours.

- Gentle exercise and stretching
- Movement therapies (e.g. rocking chair)
- Massage and/or human touch
- Heat and cold
- Music therapy
- Relaxation Therapies
- Human interaction and presence