

Dad's behavior is it a going problem or a growing problem?

When someone is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or dementia it is easy to become so transfixed on treating their memory loss that we begin to forget about other things that may ail them. However, it is important to keep all of their medical conditions under control. By doing this you will help them better manage the disease and sometimes ward off behaviors that may cause them or others harm or frustration.

A urinary tract infection is a common condition that has a tendency to increase behaviors and speed up the symptoms of both Alzheimer's disease and dementia. While more common in women, men are more likely to get urinary tract infections after the age of 50 due to issues with their prostate. In addition, those with a history of kidney stones, urinary tract abnormalities, weakened immune systems, spinal cord injuries, diabetes and those who have been catheterized are more likely to develop a urinary tract infection.

Unfortunately, many times a urinary tract infection goes undetected in our loved ones with Alzheimer's disease and dementia, simply because they can not tell us that they are in pain or remember how often they are using the toilet or even where the bathroom is located. However, as caregivers it important to watch for the signs of a urinary tract infection, which are:

- A strong urge to urinate all of the time
- A burning sensation when urinating
- Frequently passing of only small amounts of urine
- Pain in the lower abdomen or back
- Bloody or cloudy, strong-smelling urine
- Disrobing of clothing, especially pants and underwear at inappropriate times
- Urinating in inappropriate places and objects (plant containers, garbage cans etc...)
- Increased agitation or aggression
- Sudden incontinence of the bowel or bladder

Not everyone with a urinary tract infection will develop the above symptoms, but most people have some. If left untreated, urinary tract infections can cause severe incontinence and if the infection spreads to the blood system may even lead to death.

As a caregiver you can do a few simple things to help manage your loved ones bathroom routine.

- Make sure the person can find the bathroom by removing furniture or other obstacles that may hinder them. In addition, make sure the bathroom is brightly lit and place a picture of or a bathroom sign on the door or keep the bathroom door open with the lights on so that the toilet is visible.
- Provide clothes that are easy to clean and to remove, such as those with an elastic waistband.
- Encourage your loved one to tell you when they need to use the bathroom and watch for nonverbal cues such as pacing, hiding in corners and restlessness.
- Remove plants, wastebaskets and other objects that could be mistaken for a toilet.
- Find out what your loved one's normal toileting schedule is and help remind them to use the bathroom just before their usual time or try using a schedule (every two or four hours). In

addition, give your loved one plenty of time to use the bathroom, so that they fully empty their bladder and bowel.

However, remember bladder and bowel accidents may happen. It is important that you do not scold or humiliate your loved one. Treat them as you would like to be treated, with dignity and respect. Remember in the end it doesn't matter if it is a "going problem or a growing problem" he is still your Dad and you will always love him!

Azura Memory Care offers a unique model of memory care services and programs for those suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's. The company believes in the importance of transforming the culture of care through transformational programming and educational outreach. Azura Memory Care offers 13 locations in Wisconsin including Beloit, Clinton, Eau Claire, Green Bay, Janesville, Kenosha North, Kenosha South, Manitowoc, Monroe, Oshkosh, Sheboygan, Stoughton and Wausau. Visit www.azuramemory.com for additional information.