

Repetition

A person with Alzheimer's may do or say something over and over — like repeating a word, question or activity — or undo something that has just been finished. In most cases, he or she is probably looking for comfort, security and familiarity.

Causes

How to respond

Causes

The main cause of behavioral symptoms in Alzheimer's and other progressive dementias is the deterioration of brain cells which causes a decline in the individual's ability to make sense of the world. In the case of repetition, the person may not remember that she or he has just asked a question or completed a task.

Environmental influences also can cause symptoms or make them worse. People with dementia who ask questions repeatedly may be trying to express a specific concern, ask for help, or cope with frustration, anxiety or insecurity.

Because people with Alzheimer's gradually lose the ability to communicate, it's important to regularly monitor their comfort and anticipate their needs.

Learn more: [Communication Tips](#), [Behaviors Brochure \(PDF\)](#)

How to respond

- **Look for a reason behind the repetition.** Does the repetition occur around

certain people or surroundings, or at a certain time of day? Is the person trying to communicate something?

- **Focus on the emotion, not the behavior.** Rather than reacting to what the person is doing, think about how he or she is feeling.
- **Turn the action or behavior into an activity.** If the person is rubbing his or her hand across the table, provide a cloth and ask for help with dusting.
- **Stay calm, and be patient.** Reassure the person with a calm voice and gentle touch. Don't argue or try to use logic; Alzheimer's affects memory, and the person may not remember he/she asked the question already.
- **Provide an answer.** Give the person the answer that he or she is looking for, even if you have to repeat it several times. If the person with dementia is still able to read and comprehend, it may help to write it down and post it in a prominent location.
- **Engage the person in an activity.** The individual may simply be bored and need something to do. Provide structure and engage the person in a pleasant activity.
- **Use memory aids.** If the person asks the same questions over and over again, offer reminders by using notes, clocks, calendars or photographs, if these items are still meaningful.
- **Accept the behavior, and work with it.** If it isn't harmful, don't worry about it. Find ways to work with it.
- **Share your experience with others.** Join [ALZConnected](#), our online support community and message boards, and share what response strategies have worked for you and get more ideas from other caregivers.