

Caring for People with Dementia and Problem Behaviors: A Step-by-Step Evidence-Based Approach

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This approach begins with evaluation and treatment of common causes of behaviors, then uses non-drug approaches to management. Antipsychotics are reserved for severe cases due to potential side effects, which include death. **Document** all behaviors, symptoms, interventions, and outcomes. Sections are color-coded to help guide you to accompanying resources, which are *italicized* in **bold**. Blue=Evaluation. Yellow=Non-drug. Pink=Antipsychotics.

1. Evaluation

- Clearly characterize and document behavior or symptom, including frequency, severity, triggers, and consequences.
- Consider environmental factors and triggers. Are they modifiable?
- Perform medical evaluation (delirium, medical conditions, pain, depression, drugs). See ***Common Causes of Problem Behaviors (on other side)***, ***Delirium Assessment and Management***, and ***Drugs that May Cause Delirium or Problem Behaviors***.
—Address these causes if they are identified.
- Discuss with family any history that may explain or manage the behavior, e.g. patient habits, preferences, activities they enjoy.

2. Manage with non-drug approaches

- Engage in meaningful activities, redirect, clear communication, etc. See ***Non-Drug Management***.

3. Does the behavior pose risks to the resident or others, or is the resident severely distressed?

- If yes, non-drug approaches fail, and medical work-up does not reveal another cause, consider drug therapy targeted at behaviors. See ***Antipsychotic Prescribing Guide***.

4. Monitor drug therapy for effectiveness and side effects. Continue non-drug management.

- 5. **Consider antipsychotic dose reduction or discontinuation** if the drug is not effective, side effects occur, or the behaviors have been manageable. See ***Antipsychotic Prescribing Guide***. Re-assess need for drug therapy periodically, at least twice a year.

6. Use prevention and maintenance approaches to reduce further exacerbations

- Clear communication, meaningful activities, etc.
- Simplify and create a calm environment
- Manage medical conditions, depression, pain, etc.
- See ***Non-Drug Management***