



## Have you ever been lost in an unfamiliar place?



Not knowing which way to turn can be distressing. Depending on the circumstances, you may have even panicked. Perhaps you were lucky enough to have a friendly stranger help you find your way.

Sixty percent of people with dementia-related memory problems become lost at some point. That's over 120,000 Ontarians. For many of them, it happens without warning. Familiar surroundings may suddenly become strange to them. They get turned around and are unable to find their way home. Many are seniors, but a large number are not.

Becoming lost isn't just distressing; it can be dangerous. Half of the people with dementia who go missing for 24 hours end up seriously injured or dead.

That's why it's so important that we offer our assistance when we come across someone who seems lost or confused. After all, it's what we hope someone would do for us if we were in the same situation.



## Three steps – how to help



someone with dementia  
who seems to be lost

### 1. Know the signs

- Not dressed for the weather
- Standing still, looking around for a long period of time
- Pacing
- Looking confused or disoriented
- Repeating the same question within a short period of time

### 2. Know what to say

- Speak slowly and calmly
- Loudness can convey anger; do not assume person is hearing impaired
- Use short, simple words
- Ask "yes" and "no" questions
- Ask one question at a time, allowing plenty of time for response
- If necessary, repeat the same question using the exact wording; people with dementia may only understand a part of the question at a time

### 3. Know what to do

- Approach from the front
- Identify yourself and explain why you've approached the person
- Maintain a calm environment
- Maintain good eye contact
- Avoid confrontation
- Avoid correcting or "reality checks"
- Call police (911) for help returning the person home safely
- Wait with the person until the police arrives

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contact information,  
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