

## Tips to Reduce Wandering

Alzheimer's disease robs adults of their ability to recognize familiar places and faces. Many cannot remember their own names and some even lose their ability to speak. They may become confused, even in their everyday surroundings. To regain control of their situation, many people with Alzheimer's disease go in search of something reassuring – a behavior called “wandering”. The following tips can help caregivers reduce the risk of wandering.

**Be Prepared** - We can't predict who will wander, or when, or how it might happen. Families should register in the *Safe Return* program, (1-800-848-7097) before a loved one is lost. Wearing the identification bracelet or necklace, and marking clothing with labels help to identify the person with Alzheimer's.

**Encourage Movement and Exercise** – Make shared exercise, such as walking, part of your daily routine together, and allow the person access to a safe, enclosed area.

**Be Aware of Hazards** – Places that look safe might be dangerous for someone with Alzheimer's. Possible hazards include fences and gates, bodies of water, pools, dense foliage, bus stops, steep stairways, high balconies and roadways.

**Secure Your Living Area** – Do what you can to make your home safe and secure. Place locks out of othe normal line of vision. Other safety actions include – placing locks on gates, camouflaging doors, fencing in the patio or yard, installing alarms or chimes on doors, and using familiar objects, signs and night lights to guide the person.

**Communicate with the Person** – Regularly remind and reassure the person with Alzheimer's that he/she is in the right place, and is safe.

**Involve your Neighbors** – Inform your neighbors of your loved one's condition and keep a list of their names and phone numbers handy.

**Involve the Police** – Some police departments will keep a photo and fingerprints of people with Alzheimer's on file. Have the following information ready in case of an emergency – the person's age, hair and eye color, identifying marks, blood type, medical conditions, medications, dental work, allergies, and jewelry.

**Be Prepared for Other Modes of Wandering** – Although most wandering takes place on foot, some people with Alzheimer's have been known to drive hundreds of miles. Prevent this problem by keeping keys out of sight, or disabling the vehicle. People with Alzheimer's have also been known to wander by means of train, airplane, or public transportation.

