

Recognizing Pain in People with Dementia

Cathy Ciolek, DPT, FAPTA

Geriatric Clinical Specialist
Certified Dementia Care Practitioner
Certified Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Care Trainer
Living Well With Dementia, LLC



What is a pain?



Pain is subjective, however not everyone expresses pain the same way. Pain can be measured with numeric scales and other standardized measures for people with dementia such as the PAINAD and PACSLAC

Facts:



People with dementia are less likely to be prescribed pain medication after known injuries like hip or pelvic fracture.



People with dementia are more likely to have worse oral health that may result in oral pain.



People with dementia may not complain of pain, but are more likely to exhibit behaviors as a result of pain.



Depression



Behavioral Expressions



Sleep

Pain has been shown to correlated with depression in people with dementia. Reducing pain levels was associated with less depression and less medication.

Pain has been associated with behavioral expressions such as agitation, aggression, anxiety, hallucination and delusions, disruptive responses, wandering and challenges with personal care.

Pain has been associated with worse sleep efficiency, time to sleep onset and greater early morning awakening. Medicating for pain may improve sleep quality and well-being.