

Medications for Dementia

Symptom	Medication
Poor Cognitive Function	<p><i>Cholinesterase Inhibitors</i> (Aricept, Exelon, Razadyne) - block the destruction of acetylcholine (neurotransmitter) thereby slowing the course of the disease. These medications are generally warranted throughout the course of the disease.</p> <p><i>NMDA receptor agonist</i> (Namenda) - acts on another neurotransmitter called glutamate. The drug shields the brain from overexposure to glutamate which contributes to the death of brain cells in people with Alzheimer's. This medication is used in moderate to severe dementia.</p>
Depression, anxiety	When the person is less active in pleasurable activities, sleeping more, and/or more tearful or prone to emotional upset than usual, depression may be a consideration. A trial of an antidepressant medication may help in the overall daily function.
Disrupted sleep	When good "sleep hygiene" patterns fail to produce sleep throughout the night, a medication called <i>Trazadone</i> may be useful. It is essential to avoid over-the-counter medications for sleep as the side effects of these medications can increase confusion!
Agitation	Unrecognized aches and pain can often lead to agitation. Often the person with dementia cannot express in words the level of discomfort. It is important to look at non-verbal behaviors such as facial grimacing, holding a sore body part, groaning, etc. The routine administration of Tylenol can be very effective in relieving discomfort.
New or increased behavioral symptoms	These symptoms often indicate that there maybe an underlying illness, such as an infection or reaction to a new medication. Be sure to consult your physician when this occurs.