



Common Pain Behaviours in Cognitively Impaired Elderly Persons

As care providers, we must ensure for those adults unable to speak their pain that our assessment skills are top notch!

For persons suffering with dementia, aphasia, or other conditions preventing an oral report, pain expression sometimes takes on less obvious forms, such as confusion, social withdrawal, aggression or subtle changes in behaviors ... **which are not always typical manifestations of pain.**

The American Geriatric Society Guidelines help lead us to ensure we communicate as effectively as possible as we probe and strive to hear what our patients are trying to tell when they are suffering from pain syndromes.

Facial Expressions	Verbalizations Vocalization	Body Movements	Changes in Interpersonal Interactions	Changes in Interpersonal Activity Patterns or Routines	Mental Status Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Slight frown ▪ Sad face ▪ Frightened face ▪ Grimacing ▪ Wrinkled forehead ▪ Closed or tightened eyes ▪ Any distorted expression ▪ Rapid blinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sighing ▪ Moaning ▪ Groaning ▪ Grunting ▪ Chanting ▪ Calling out ▪ Noisy breathing ▪ Asking for help ▪ Verbally abusive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rigid posture ▪ Tense body posture ▪ Guarding ▪ Fidgeting ▪ Increased pacing ▪ Increased rocking ▪ Restricted movement ▪ Gait or mobility changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aggressiveness ▪ Combativeness ▪ Resisting care ▪ Decreased social interactions ▪ Socially inappropriate behaviours ▪ Disruptive behaviours ▪ Acting withdrawn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refusing food ▪ Appetite changes ▪ Increase in rest periods ▪ Changes in sleep & rest patterns ▪ Sudden cessation of common routines ▪ Increased wandering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crying or tears ▪ Increased confusion ▪ Irritability or distress