



Mirrors and Alzheimers

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Mirrors and reflections can terrify those living with dementia

**Did you know that mirrors can be very disturbing for
someone with Alzheimer's or dementia?**

**For some people, seeing their reflection
in a mirror can cause anxiety, anger,
or even hysterical terror.**

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If your older adult starts acting irrationally without any clear triggers, look around the room for mirrors or reflective surfaces.

Differences in lighting could also accidentally create a mirror effect. For example, in the evening and night an uncovered window looks like a mirror because the inside of the house is bright and the outside is dark.

We explain why mirrors and dementia can cause problems and share 10 creative ideas for covering mirrors to eliminate them as sources of fear and anxiety in dementia.

Why are mirrors and dementia a bad combination? Experts think that people with dementia fear mirrors because they don't understand that they're seeing a reflected image of themselves.

They don't recognize the person they see and think that a stranger has suddenly appeared near them. Being startled by this "intruder" can make them so confused and upset that they react completely irrationally. They might resist your attempts to calm them or explain that they're safe.

A fear of mirrors could also be a reason why some seniors with dementia refuse to bathe or become agitated in the bathroom. They might be afraid because "that stranger" is always present for these personal activities.

10 ways to eliminate fear of mirrors in seniors with dementia

1. Remove unnecessary mirrors, like those in their room, and any decorative mirrors around the house. If they can't easily be removed, keep reading for tips on how to cover them.
2. Draw all window drapes before the sun sets.
3. Turn full-length standing mirrors around to face the wall and only turn them right-side out when needed. Keep the turned-around mirror in a closet or behind an open door to make it even less noticeable.
4. Drape a towel or large piece of cloth over wall-mounted mirrors.
5. Attach adhesive pleated fabric shades (like these) at the top of a mirror to cover it like a window.
6. Hide a mirror with a poster – soothing nature scenes like these are nice.
7. Transform a mirror into pretty stained glass art with special adhesive window film – these flowers and patterns are lovely.
8. Remove or cover up mirrored medicine cabinet doors. Make sure to remove any medications or sharp objects if the door is removed.
9. Cover large mirrors (like mirrored closet doors) with self-adhesive contact paper in a soothing color and minimal pattern. Try simple designs like white wood panels, light maple wood, or plain light blue.
10. Install a curtain rod (like this decorative one) above the mirror and hang curtains to cover the mirror like it's a window. Open the drapes anytime you need to use the mirror. Or, use semi-sheer curtains for a lighter look that can still hide reflections.



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