

STEADIER GROUND FIELD CARD

New Confusion in a Patient With Dementia

TRY SAYING

- "Is this how she was yesterday, or is this new?"
Ask whoever was actually there.
- "What day do you think it is?" Listen for wandering attention, not the right answer.
- "I want eyes on this before end of shift."

AVOID SAYING

- "He's just like this, he has dementia." Ends the workup before it starts.
- Charting "confused, baseline" without confirming baseline with anyone.

WORKING NEW CONFUSION

1. Ask last shift or family whether this is new.
2. Check vitals, pulse ox, glucose, last voided, last bowel movement, and the medication list.
3. Screen with your unit's delirium tool if you have one.
4. Document specifics, not just "confused."

Escalate now: new confusion with any drop in vital signs, not just the confusion alone.

Rapid response and delirium protocols: set by your unit, not this page.

find steadier ground

dementiasteady.com · Not a substitute for medical advice

STEADIER GROUND FIELD CARD

Trying to Get Up, Pulling at Lines

TRY SAYING

- "Let's get you to the bathroom. Want to try?"
- "I'm right here. Let's figure out what you need."
- "Let's get you turned and comfortable before you have to ask."

AVOID SAYING

- "Stay in bed," repeated. Doesn't work the fifth time either.
- Restraint or sedation before checking the ordinary reasons.

IF THEY KEEP TRYING TO GET UP

1. Offer the bathroom before they have to ask, especially overnight.
2. Check pain and reposition on a schedule.
3. Remove any line or lead that isn't still needed.
4. Document what came right before each attempt.

Restraint and restriction: set by your unit, not this page.

What it treats: the behavior. The reason is usually still there afterward.

find steadier ground

dementiasteady.com · Not a substitute for medical advice

STEADIER GROUND FIELD CARD

Agitated or Resistant During a Bedside Procedure

READ THE RESISTANCE AS PAIN FIRST

- PAINAD, the validated dementia pain scale, scores pushing away, striking out, and a rigid body as top-range pain indicators, not behavior.
- Where the resistance starts is a localization. Document it.
- Watch the face, not just the answer.

TRY SAYING

- "I'm going to touch your arm now." Every time.
- "Does this hurt? Show me where."
- "Can your daughter sit with you while I do this?"

AVOID SAYING

- "Almost done, hold still."
- Clinical talk across the bed to a colleague.

GETTING THE PROCEDURE DONE

1. Treat pain first, before resistance starts.
2. Cut the sensory load: fewer people, quieter voices.
3. Bring in family if available.
4. Ask whether it has to happen exactly now.

Restraint and sedation: set by your unit and your physician's orders.

Untreated pain: doesn't stop being pain once someone is held down.

find steadier ground

dementiasteady.com · Not a substitute for medical advice

STEADIER GROUND FIELD CARD

Sundowning on the Unit

TRY SAYING

- "The day shift is heading home. I'm here for the night."
- "Let's turn some lights on and see what's outside."
- "Would a call from home help right now?"

AVOID SAYING

- "It's just sundowning." Don't stop checking pain and the bathroom.
- Long reorientation explanations at 7pm.

BEFORE DUSK

1. Lights on, curtains open, the schedule visible.
2. Offer the bathroom, a snack, and water proactively.
3. Introduce the night shift by name.
4. Track whether tonight matches most nights.

If it doesn't match most nights: work it up as new confusion instead.

Sedation orders: set by your unit and the treating physician.

find steadier ground

dementiasteady.com · Not a substitute for medical advice

STEADIER GROUND FIELD CARD

Wandering or Elopement Risk

TRY SAYING

- "Where are you headed? Let's walk this way."
- "I need your help with something first."
- "She's not in her room. Starting the count now."

AVOID SAYING

- "You can't leave." No redirect, no help.
- Waiting to see if they turn up before searching.

THE FIRST MINUTE

1. Start the count immediately, don't wait.
2. Check bathroom and day room first.
3. Redirect with a task, not a command.
4. Know your unit's protocol before you need it.

Search and security protocol: set by your hospital, not this page.

Every minute before the search starts: is a minute the search has to cover later.

find steadier ground

dementiasteady.com · Not a substitute for medical advice