



**FINDING Your Way**

# A New Program

Alzheimer Society of Ontario  
May 8, 2013

*For people with dementia,  
every step counts.*

*Soci   Alzheimer Society* Funded by  Ontario



**FINDING Your Way**

*For people with dementia,  
every step counts.*

## Overview

- What is *Finding Your Way*?
- Why is *Finding Your Way* important?
- Why do people with dementia go missing?
- What to look for and how to help?
- What can be done to prevent a missing incident?
- Resources Available

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## Background

- Finding Your Way Program is a part of Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors.
- Ontario Senior Secretariat partnered with Alzheimer Society Ontario to create and roll out the program.
- The driving force was concern over deaths that have occurred as a result of missing incidents and the recognized need for awareness and prevention.

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## Background

- Advisory committee was formed, including the Ontario Government, Alzheimer Society, Ontario Provincial Police
- 2-1-1 was engaged to refer callers to local Alzheimer Societies for support
- 5 local Alzheimer Societies, have been funded to role out the FYW program – Alzheimer Societies of Durham, Hamilton-Halton, Peel, Toronto, and York Region

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## Finding Your Way is a program designed to:

- Raise **awareness** of the risk of going missing for people with dementia
- Help **prevent** missing incidents by promoting the creation of a safety plan
- Support the **safe return** of people who do go missing

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## Four Outreach Components:

- 1) Public awareness and education to enhance community response to missing incidents
- 2) Increased resources for family/caregivers to improve prevention and preparedness
- 3) Building partnerships with ethno-cultural organizations to improve outreach to people and their families who are affected by Alzheimer's disease and other dementias
- 4) Police training to add modules about missing incidents into the current police curriculum

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## Why is Finding Your Way important?

- As of 2012 close to a ¼ million seniors in Ontario are living with dementia
- Six out of ten people with dementia go missing, often without warning
- Half of those not found within 24 hours will be gravely injured or die
- Nearly 75% of people who go missing are found within a quarter mile of their home or last location seen

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## Why do people with dementia go missing?

### **Loss of memory:**

- due to short term memory loss a person may set out to run an errand and then forget where they were going and why
- they may go out looking for a family member because they forgot where their family member said they were going

### **Changed environment:**

- the person may feel anxious or nervous in a new environment and leave it in search of something familiar

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## **Why do people with dementia go missing?**

### **Searching for the past:**

- as people become more confused, they may go looking for someone, or something, relating to their past
- this can be a house or place once lived in, or a person from their past, who may even be deceased

### **Excess energy:**

- people with dementia may find it harder, as the disease progresses, to concentrate on tasks and may walk away from an activity, and keep walking, to have something to do

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## **Why do people with dementia go missing?**


### **Confusing night and day:**

- people with dementia may suffer from insomnia, or wake in the early hours and become disorientated
- they may think it is daytime, during night time, and decide to go for a walk

### **A job to perform:**

- people with dementia may believe they have a task to do [i.e. go to work, pick up children] even if that has not been their role for years or decades

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## Why do people with dementia go missing?

**Discomfort or pain:**


- Walking may ease physical discomfort [medical check-up is important]

**Dreams:**

- An inability to differentiate dreams from reality may cause the person to go into action as they thought dream was real

**All the potential reasons for someone with dementia to go missing are related to changes that are occurring in the brain.**

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## Signs that someone may be confused about their whereabouts?

- Not appropriately dressed for the weather
- Looking up at street signs
- Standing still, looking around for a long time
- Look on face of confusion or disorientation
- Repeating the same question in a short period of time

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## **How to help the individual?**

- Approach from the front and identify yourself
- Speak slowly and calmly
- Use short simple words and “yes” or “no” questions
- Do not raise your voice
- Ask one question at a time and leave time for response between questions
- Repeat question using the same words used the first time

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## **How to help the individual?**

- Maintain a calm environment
- Maintain good eye contact
- Avoid confrontation
- Avoid correcting
- Call police (911)
- Stay with person until police arrive, this may mean walking with them or following behind them.

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## Prevention

- Register on MedicAlert® SafelyHome®
- Fill out the Identification Kit found on the Finding Your Way website and take a current picture
- Carry identification
- Consider a locating device
- Involve neighbours, family, friends
- Have a buddy system
- Create check-in systems and routines

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## Missing Incident

- Remain calm
- Call 911 – search is an emergency
  - Provide the police with Identification Kit and recent photo
  - Inform them about medications, where person sometimes goes, any locating device being used, and any registry person might be on
- Mobilize Support:
  - Leave someone at home in case person returns
  - Alert neighbours and friends that person is missing
  - Alert police of credit cards that could be used or license plate

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## Missing Incident

### **Do a quick search:**

- Look inside the house including the garage
- Check to see if any items, such as luggage, car keys or credit cards are missing
- Look around the outside of the house (dwelling)
- Do not do this in a rural area as you may compromise the search for police

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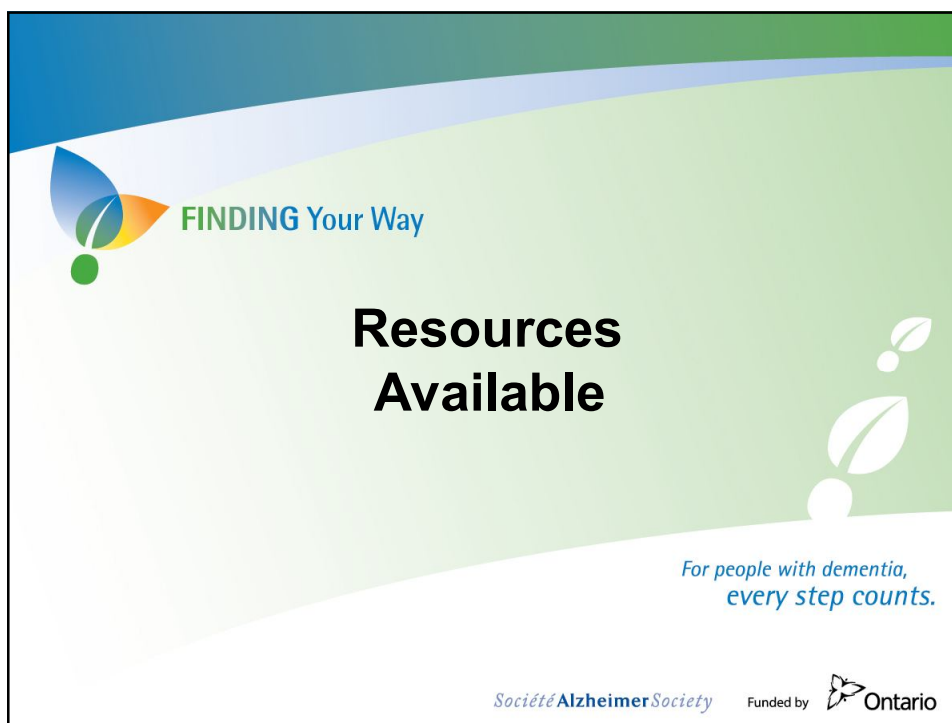
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## Post Missing Incident

- Be prepared
- Approach calmly
- Provide reassurance
- Keep your perspective
- Ask for help

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## Program Link on ASO's Main webpage

ASO homepage



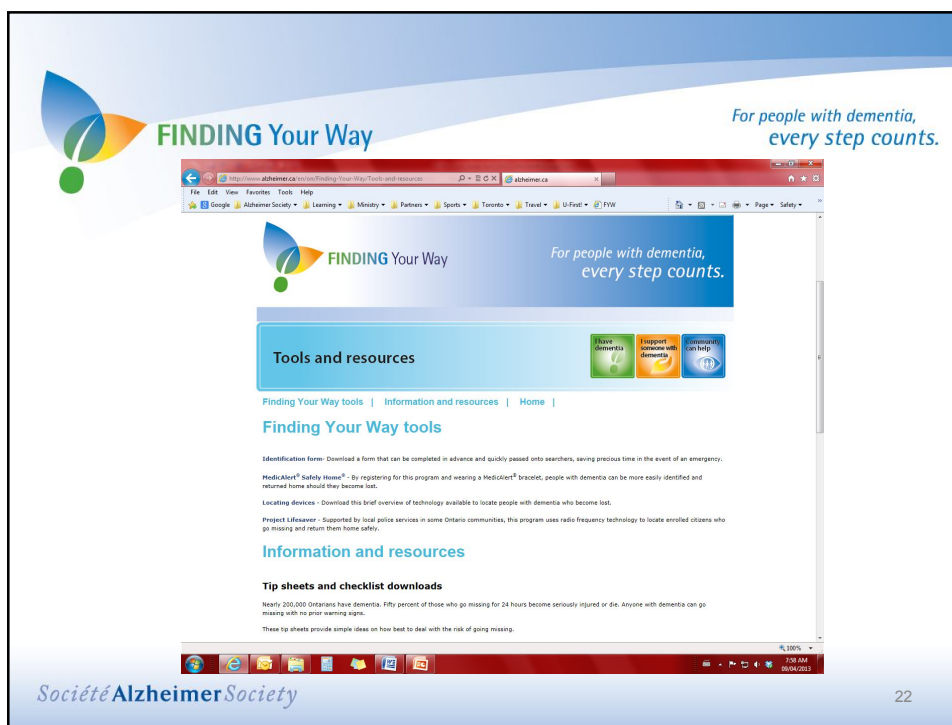
Right-side bar



**For position only**  
Program logo links to  
program webpage

(Note: program logo  
will be in English &  
French bilingual and in  
monochrome colour)

## Finding Your Way homepage layout





For people with dementia,  
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## PDF Downloads Available on Website

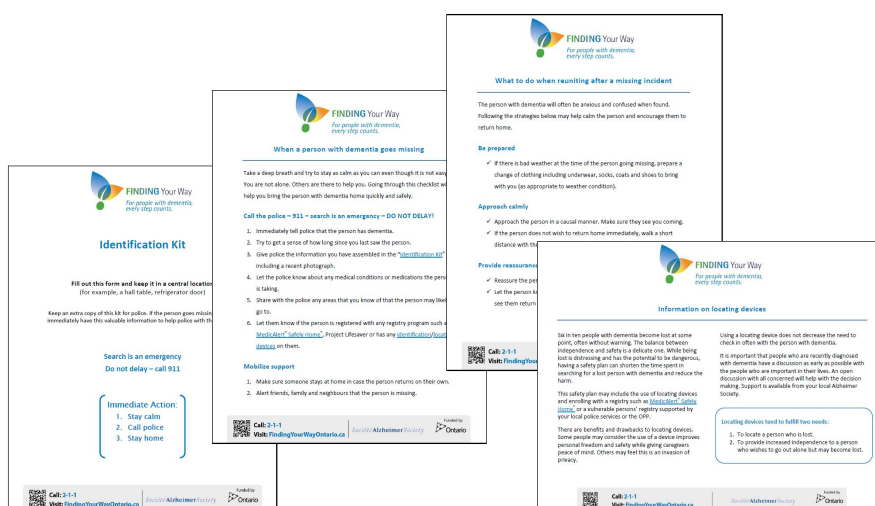
- All tip sheets (3 versions)
- Identification kit
- Locating devices information
- Incident response checklist
- Post-incident response checklist

All PDF downloads are translated into French, Punjabi,  
Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese

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## PDF downloads on website (sample preview only)



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## Tip Sheets (Front) – Quick “What” and “How” Tips for PWD, Caregivers and Community

3.75" x 8.2"

**I have dementia**  
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**Staying active and staying safe with memory loss**

Even though I have memory loss, that doesn't stop me from staying active and doing the things I enjoy. Of course, some days are better than others. Knowing how to keep myself safe is key.

The other day I was walking my dog and forgot how to get home. It happened without warning. It was pretty scary, especially because it had never happened to me before.

So now I plan ahead. It gives me peace of mind.

What happened to me may not happen to you, but it's always better to be safe than sorry.

Being prepared is the smart thing to do. Create a safety plan.

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Call: 2-1-1  
Visit: [FindingYourWayOntario.ca](http://FindingYourWayOntario.ca)

3.75" x 8.7"

**I support someone with dementia**  
*For people with dementia, every step counts.*

**FINDING Your Way**

**Keeping mom safe without taking away her freedom**

My mom has her good days and her bad days. To almost everyone, she looks normal, but she has trouble remembering things. Her doctor says it's dementia.

Staying active is important to her. Getting out of the house keeps her healthy. It's something I encourage.

That is why I was concerned to hear that 6 out of every 10 people with dementia lose their way and go missing. It wouldn't worry me so much if it weren't for the fact that half of those who go missing for 24 hours end up seriously injured or dead.

I want to keep my mom safe, but I don't want to take away her freedom.

Fortunately, I learned how to make a safety plan which allows her to stay active while giving me peace of mind.

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3.75" x 9.2"

**Community can help**  
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**Have you ever been lost in an unfamiliar place?**

Not knowing which way to turn can be distressing. Depending on the circumstances, you may have even panicked. Perhaps you were lucky enough to have a friendly stranger help you find your way.

Sixty percent of people with dementia-related memory problems become lost at some point. That's over 120,000 Ontarians. For many of them, it happens without warning. Familiar surroundings may suddenly become strange to them. They get turned around and are unable to find their way home. Many are seniors, but a large number are not.

Becoming lost isn't just distressing; it can be dangerous. Half of the people with dementia who go missing for 24 hours end up seriously injured or dead.

That's why it's so important that we offer our assistance when we come across someone who seems lost or confused. After all, it's what we hope someone would do for us if we were in the same situation.

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0.5" increment

**Community can help**  
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**FINDING Your Way**

**I support someone with dementia**

**I have dementia**  
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**FINDING Your Way**

**Staying active and staying safe with memory loss**

Even though I have memory loss, that doesn't stop me from staying active and doing the things I enjoy. Of course, some days are better than others. Knowing how to keep myself safe is key.

The other day I was walking my dog and forgot how to get home. It happened without warning. It was pretty scary, especially because it had never happened to me before.

So now I plan ahead. It gives me peace of mind.

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## Tip Sheets (Back) - Can Be Stacked or Used Individually

3.75" x 8.2"

**Make a plan.**  
**It's the smart move.**

- **Find a buddy** – someone to come along with you, or someone who knows to look for you if you're on your own and overdue.
- **Carry identification** – something that lets people know how they can help if you become lost – consider enrolling in MedicAlert® Safety Home®.
- **Leave your picture and a description of yourself with someone you trust** – something that can be passed onto searchers if you are not found by someone you know.
- **Consider carrying a device** that will help people locate you in an emergency.

2.625" w  
1" h  
ASIO (local societies)  
contact information  
For Position Only

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3.75" x 8.7"

**Wandering and getting lost. Have a plan.**

**Keeping people with dementia safe doesn't mean keeping them from being active.**

- Have someone go with them on outings. If you're comfortable with them going out on their own, make sure someone knows where they're going and checks that they get back on time. Ask neighbours, friends, and family to help out.
- Know what steps you can take to reduce the risk of them going missing.
- Provide them with ID jewelry. Enroll them in MedicAlert® Safety Home®.
- Have a recent close-up photo and a description of them that you can give to police if a search needs to be started. Complete an identification kit. If you wait until they go missing to gather this information, it will delay search efforts and make things even more stressful for you.
- Consider having them wear an electronic device that will help searchers locate them in an emergency.
- If they do go missing, call 911 right away. Search is an emergency. Tell police that a person with dementia is missing.

2.625" w  
1" h  
ASIO (local societies)  
contact information  
For Position Only

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3.75" x 9.2"

**Three steps – how to help someone with dementia who seems to be lost**

- 1. Know the signs**
  - Not dressed for the weather
  - Standing still, looking around for a long period of time
  - Pacing
  - Looking confused or disoriented
  - Repeating the same question within a short period of time
- 2. Know what to say**
  - Speak slowly and calmly
  - Loudness can convey anger; do not assume person is hearing impaired
  - Use short, simple words
  - Ask "yes" and "no" questions
  - Ask one question at a time, allowing plenty of time for response
  - If necessary, repeat the same question using the exact wording; people with dementia may only understand a part of the question at a time
- 3. Know what to do**
  - Approach from the front
  - Identify yourself and explain why you've approached the person
  - Maintain a calm environment
  - Maintain good eye contact
  - Avoid confrontation
  - Avoid correcting or "reality checks"
  - Call police (911) for help returning the person home safely
  - Wait with the person until the police arrives

2.625" w  
1" h  
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## Identification Kit

- The kit is a four page tool
- Includes the person with dementia's basic information, physical description, identifying features, recent photo, medical info, potential places to look, car and license plate info, and emergency contact information
- Can be filled in with personal information and passed on to searchers, saving time in event of emergency

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## Locating Devices

**Locating devices may be helpful:**

1. To locate a person who is lost
2. To provide increased independence to a person who wishes to go out alone but may become lost

Using a locating device does not decrease the need to check in often with the person with dementia.

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## Locating Devices



**MedicAlert** *Safely Home*<sup>®</sup>

Canadian MedicAlert Foundation

- A nationwide program designed to help identify the person who is lost and assist in a safe return home
- Members receive an engraved identification which allows police and emergency responders to quickly identify the person who has wandered and bring the family back together
- 1-855-581-3794

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## Locating Devices

### **Global Positioning Systems (GPS)**

- Various models available

### **Radio Frequency**

- Project Lifesaver (where available)
- Wristband worn by the person who may get lost

### **Cell Phone**

- Newer technologies such as smart phones and tablets

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## Other Resources

- Download a checklist for steps to follow when a person with dementia goes missing
- Download a checklist for what to do when reuniting after a missing incident
- See videos of caregivers sharing their experiences with missing incidents
  - They are in each of the four designated languages:  
English, French, Chinese, Punjabi

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## Where the program materials can be accessed?

All the programs tools can be downloaded and printed from the Finding Your Way website:

[www.findingyourwayontario.ca](http://www.findingyourwayontario.ca)

The materials on the site are available in:

English, French, Punjabi, and Chinese

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# Questions?

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