

Canadian Clinical Practice Guidelines for Assessing and Managing Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia

Key takeaways for health care providers

For many people living with dementia, changes to mood and behaviour are common. These changes are referred to as behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD). BPSD can affect the quality of life for people living with dementia and their care partners. It can sometimes be difficult for health care providers to know how to best support people living with dementia who experience BPSD. **Access the full guidelines and discover additional resources [here](#).**



Assessing BPSD

Understanding what may contribute to BPSD requires a holistic approach beginning with understanding how health conditions, the person's background, and the environment may be playing a role in the development of BPSD, ideally using a team-based approach. Depending on the type of BPSD, different assessment tools might be used to help better understand specific BPSD and to monitor symptoms over time.



Symptoms of BPSD

Symptoms of BPSD can include:

- anxiety
- depression
- agitation
- psychosis
- disturbed sleep
- loss of interest



Management of BPSD

Supporting a person living with BPSD starts with an understanding of the individual and how they would prefer to be supported. Usually, psychosocial or non-pharmacological approaches are sometimes recommended first, based on what resources and supports are available and preferred by the person living with dementia. Medications may also be recommended in addition to psychosocial approaches, depending on the type and severity of BPSD.



Canadian Clinical Guidelines for Assessing and Managing BPSD



CCSMH
Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health

Key takeaways from the guidelines



Psychosocial approaches

Psychosocial interventions include a range of approaches that may work best when they are aligned with the preferences of people living with dementia. Examples of evidence-based interventions include training and approaches to care involving health care providers or caregivers, psychotherapies adapted for the person living with dementia, exercise, sensory-based approaches (e.g., aromatherapy, massage), and other interventions like music or animal-assisted therapy.



Pharmacological treatments

Medications may be recommended for BPSD in cases that may be more challenging or severe and have not responded to psychosocial approaches. When medications are recommended, they should be prescribed at low doses, and used only for as long as they are needed. While medications can be helpful in some situations, they need to be used and monitored carefully because they can be associated with side-effects.

Visit www.ccsmh.ca/areas-of-focus/dementia to learn more.



Behaviours in Dementia Toolkit

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Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health

www.behavioursindementia.ca

The Behaviours in Dementia Toolkit is an **online library of over 300 free, practical resources** that can help you better understand and compassionately respond to dementia-related changes in mood or behaviour. Visit the website to access free, evidence informed resources to support people experiencing behaviours in dementia.