



5 things you should know about dementia

alzheimers.org.uk



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Dementia is not a natural part of ageing



We all forget a name or a face sometimes. Especially as we get older. But dementia is something different.

Memory problems are one of a number of symptoms that people with dementia may experience. Others include difficulties with planning, thinking things through, struggling to keep up with a conversation, and sometimes changes in mood or behaviour.

Dementia is not a natural part of ageing and it doesn't just affect older people. Over 40,000 people under 65 in the UK have dementia. This is called early-onset or young-onset dementia.

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Help and support

If you're worried about your memory, or about someone else, the first thing to do is make an appointment with the GP.

There are lots of reasons someone may show symptoms similar to dementia. These include depression, chest and urinary tract infections, vitamin and thyroid deficiencies and brain tumours.

Your GP can check for most of these and take the next steps to find out what's causing your memory problems.

We know it can feel daunting, but the quicker you talk to your GP, the sooner you can get the information, advice and support you need.

For more information, visit **[alzheimers.org.uk](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk)**

'It really helped to get Dad's diagnosis when we did. We finally knew that he wasn't just being forgetful, and it meant we had something to work with. You might not want to hear it, but once you know, you can then find the support you need.'

Kim, whose father Derek has dementia

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Dementia is caused by diseases of the brain



Diseases such as Alzheimer's disease cause nerve cells to die, damaging the structure and chemistry of the brain.

There are lots of other causes and no two types of dementia are the same. In different types of dementia there is damage to different parts of the brain.

Other types of dementia include:

- vascular dementia (caused by problems with blood supply to the brain)
- mixed dementia (usually Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia)
- dementia with Lewy bodies
- frontotemporal dementia (including Pick's disease).

Dementia is not usually passed down through genes

Alzheimer's disease tends to start slowly and progress gradually. Vascular dementia after a stroke often progresses in a 'stepped' way. This means that symptoms are stable for a while and then suddenly get worse.

Everyone's dementia is different

Everyone experiences dementia in their own way. Lots of things can affect this, including the person's attitude to their diagnosis and their physical health. Other factors include the relationships they have with friends and family, the treatment and support they get, and their surroundings.

For more information, visit **[alzheimers.org.uk/aboutdementia](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/aboutdementia)**

Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia

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Dementia is not just about losing your memory



When most people hear the word dementia, they think of memory loss.

And it does often start by affecting the short-term memory. Someone with dementia might repeat themselves and have problems recalling things that happened recently. But dementia can also affect the way people think, speak, perceive things, feel and behave.

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Other common symptoms include:

- difficulties concentrating
- problems planning and thinking things through
- struggling with familiar daily tasks, like following a recipe or using a bank card
- issues with language and communication, for example trouble remembering the right word or keeping up with a conversation
- problems judging distances (even though eyesight is fine)
- mood changes and difficulties controlling emotions. For example, someone might get unusually sad, frightened, angry, easily upset, or lose their self-confidence and become withdrawn.

Symptoms of dementia gradually get worse over time. How quickly this happens varies from person to person – and some people stay independent for years.

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People can
still live well
with dementia

Although there is no cure for dementia, scientists and researchers are working hard to find one.

Until that day comes, support and treatments are available that can help with symptoms and managing daily life. These can allow people with dementia to lead active, purposeful lives and carry on doing the things that matter to them most.



Treatments

There are drugs available that may help with some types of dementia and stop symptoms progressing for a while. This is one reason why it's important to go to the GP as soon as you suspect there's a problem.

Other things that can help with symptoms of dementia include:

- cognitive stimulation, which might involve doing word puzzles or discussing current affairs
- life story work, sharing memories and experiences with a carer or nurse to create a 'life story book'
- keeping as active as possible – physically, mentally and socially – which can boost memory and self esteem, and help avoid depression.

For information on treatments, visit alzheimers.org.uk/treatment

Our research

Through research, we're learning more about dementia every day. Researchers are working with people with dementia and their families to look into the causes of dementia.

They're looking at how it might be prevented and diagnosed earlier, and how to improve quality of life for people living with the condition. The more we understand, the more we can do to help people stay independent and live the life they want for as long as possible.

Find out more about our research at alzheimers.org.uk/research

'Prior to a diagnosis, we all had a talent, we all had skills and abilities – they don't all disappear overnight simply because we get a diagnosis of dementia.

So look to our talents to help you understand dementia better because we are the experts – we have so much we can offer you.'

Shelagh, living with dementia

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**Alzheimer's
Society is here
for anyone
affected by
dementia**



We provide expert information and support to anyone affected by dementia.

- Visit our website for everything you need to know about dementia **alzheimers.org.uk**
- Call our National Dementia Helpline on 0300 222 11 22 if you'd like to talk to someone for information, support or advice
- Sign up to Talking Point, our online community for anyone affected by dementia. Unite, share experiences and get support 24 hours a day, seven days a week **alzheimers.org.uk/talkingpoint**
- Find services local to you for people affected by dementia **alzheimers.org.uk/getsupport**

Whatever you're going through, wherever you are, we are here for you

About Alzheimer's Society

By 2021, 1 million people in the UK will be living with the condition. But dementia won't win.

Until the day we find a cure, Alzheimer's Society will be here for anyone affected by dementia – wherever they are, whatever they're going through. Everything we do is informed and inspired by them.

We are the UK's leading dementia charity. Every day, we work tirelessly to find new treatments and, ultimately, a cure for dementia. We provide expert information, training, and support services to all those who need our help. And we are creating a more dementia-friendly society so people with the condition can live without fear and prejudice.

Let's take on dementia together. Volunteer. Donate. Campaign for change. Whatever you do, unite with us against dementia.



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