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**MANCHESTER**  
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# **A Guide to Dementia**

## **For people with dementia and their carers**



# **Older Minds Matter**

**This guide is quite lengthy, you may benefit from re-reading some parts of it once you have absorbed the general ideas within it**

## **What is Dementia?**

Dementia is a disorder which affects how the brain works. It can be a life changing experience. The term 'dementia' describes a group of symptoms that affect people in many ways. Dementia affects all types of things such as memory, thinking, behaviour and personality. Dementia can be difficult to recognise at first, as changes can sometimes be small and gradual.

## **Types of Dementia:**

There are lots of types of Dementia that are caused by changes happening to the brain.

Different types of Dementia can show slightly different symptoms.

The most common types of dementia are:

- Alzheimer's Disease
- Vascular Dementia
- Dementia with Lewy Bodies



## **Common Symptoms**

People experience dementia in different ways because we are all individual. The symptoms experienced may depend upon the type of dementia, physical changes in the brain, the personality of the person and the environment and support someone receives. There are some commonly experienced symptoms (but even with these symptoms not everyone will experience all of them):

### **Changes in memory**

- Remembering recent events may be difficult.
- Memories from long ago may remain strong.
- Losing things such as keys, shopping, tablets, handbag or wallet
- Getting information mixed up
- Having trouble remembering names or faces
- Getting lost
- Becoming confused

### **Changes in behaviour**

Routines may become harder to follow for some people, however, for others they are an important way of coping and can become very rigid.

Sometimes frustration may lead to irritation or anger. Asking the same questions or saying the same thing over and over or finding difficulties with day-to-day tasks. Wanting to stay at home more than usual or becoming less involved in social life.



## **Help your situation by trying some of these things:**

**Get physically active** - moderate exercise has been found to be effective in improving mood, building physical strength and preventing falls.

**Get mentally active** - Helping the mind to stay active and stimulated can help. Keep up past hobbies or take up new ones such as crosswords, quizzes, word searches, playing chess.

**Eat well** - Diet plays an important role in staying healthy. Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and drink plenty of water.

**Build social supports** - You can often feel isolated. It is important to involve other people in your life. Find people and places to go that make you feel comfortable. Spending time with others and getting out and about can improve mental health and quality of life. Dementia isn't anybody's fault and shouldn't be hidden away, talk to friends and family about the problems and ask for support.

**Seek emotional support from friends and family** – Whether you have dementia or are the family carer, it will be helpful to have someone to talk to. Don't keep things bottled up inside, your feelings are better shared.

**Keeping healthy** - People with dementia who are ill or in pain can often experience a worsening of symptoms. If you have dementia and become ill see the GP straight away. If you are a carer, your health is also important.

**Do things just for fun** - It's important to carry on finding happiness in life even though the memory may let you down. Try new things, keep up old things, and don't forget how to have fun. Laughter is a good medicine. Take new photographs or look at old ones, memories are there for making!

## **Medication**

There are different types of medication that can be used to help treat symptoms of dementia. Medication can sometimes be helpful in improving memory, mood and behaviour. Not everyone is suitable for these medications; your GP or a Psychiatrist will be able to advise you.

## **Talking therapies**

Dementia is a life-changing illness. Services are available that can help to support people with dementia and family members to cope with the illness. There are a variety of support groups available where people can learn about the illness or come and meet others. Specialist staff can support you at home and offer education, counselling, problem solving and advice on living with dementia.

## **Lifestyle changes**

There is a lot you can do to change and adapt your life to cope better with dementia:



## **Changes in thoughts and feelings - For the person with dementia**

- Sadness, irritability or anger
- Feeling bewildered and uncertain of things
- Depression
- Loss of self esteem and confidence
- Anxiety and worry
- Poor concentration
- Sometimes people may experience hallucinations where they see things or hear things that are not there

## **Changes in thoughts and feelings - For family and friends**

- Worry about what is happening to the person
- Stress due to caring demands
- Uncertainty about the illness
- Worry about the future
- Depression and / or anxiety
- Feelings of loss and guilt

## **Treatment and Support for Dementia**

Treatment and support are available to help people to live with dementia in a positive way. Help is available to support people with dementia and their family and friends to understand the illness and to find ways of coping with and adjusting to it.

A variety of illnesses can cause forgetfulness and poor concentration so it is important to rule these things out.

If you think you or someone you know may have Dementia, it is important to talk to the GP. Some of the agencies at the back of this leaflet may be able to offer help.



## Getting Assessed for Dementia

Getting a diagnosis of dementia may take some time because the changes can be small and gradual and the symptoms may sometimes look like other illnesses.

Getting the diagnosis right however, can make a big difference to you. It can help improve understanding and make sense of what is happening. It can also help you to plan for the future and access help.

Seeing the GP is usually the first step. The GP will want you to describe what changes there have been, it is a good idea to be prepared and take some notes with you. They may want to carry out some tests such as blood tests and memory tests. These tests will help see if there is another illness causing the changes. The tests will help the GP to refer you to the right people. Your GP is likely to refer you to a specialist to help get the right diagnosis. During this time, the GP will still be available to support you. If a diagnosis of Dementia is made, the specialist will be able to refer you to other forms of help if needed at that time.

The person with Dementia and the carer are entitled to an assessment of their own needs from social services.

Help is available from the organisations listed below at the back of the booklet.





### Services that may need referral from a professional:

- Community Mental Health Teams:
- North: 0161 720 2737 / 2852; Central: 0161 274 4173  
South: 0161 283 5822 / 945 6287
- Admiral Nurses: 0161 275 9115
- Memory Clinic-Referral via your GP
- Young Onset Dementia service: 0161 273 3049 (for people who are under the age of 65 with Dementia)

### Direct access services:

- Adult Social Care (formerly social services): 0161 255 8250
- Alzheimer's Society: 0161 203 6434
- Manchester Carers Forum: 0161 629 9859
- Age Concern: 0161 833 3944
- Manchester Carers Centre: 0161 835 2995
- NHS Direct: 0845 4647 (available 24 hours a day for any health problem)
- Samaritans: 08457 909090 (Confidential emotional support for people in crisis, 24 hours a day)
- Manchester Leisure: 0161 232 3104 (over 50's activity in Manchester)
- Manchester Gateway Service: 0161 234 5608 (one stop shop for information on health, support, services and more)

### Useful websites:

- Help The Aged: [www.helptheaged.org.uk](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk)
- Age Concern: [www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk)
- Alzheimer's Society: [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)
- For dementia: [www.fordementia.org.uk](http://www.fordementia.org.uk)
- Manchester Carers Forum: [www.manchestercarersforum.org.uk](http://www.manchestercarersforum.org.uk)
- Manchester City Council: [www.manchester.gov.uk](http://www.manchester.gov.uk)
- Manchester Mental Health & Social Care Trust: [www.mhsc.nhs.uk](http://www.mhsc.nhs.uk)