



Leading the fight against dementia

We're all living longer. That means we're all facing a higher risk of one day developing dementia. It may be you. Or it may be someone in your family.

Dementia is caused by diseases of the brain. Symptoms can include memory loss, difficulties with thinking, reasoning or language, and sometimes changes in mood or behaviour. But dementia affects everyone differently. Some things to look out for are:

- struggling to remember recent events or people's names
- finding it hard to follow conversations or TV programmes
- repeating yourself or losing the thread of what you're saying
- difficulty concentrating, thinking things through or following instructions
- feeling confused even when in a well-known place
- becoming unusually anxious, depressed or agitated.

If you're worried that you, or someone close to you, may have dementia, it's important to talk about it.

Talk to your family and friends. Talk to your GP. Talk to us.

The more we talk about dementia, the more we'll know. And the more prepared we'll be to face it.

Talking to someone you're worried about

If you think someone close to you might have dementia, it can be difficult to start a conversation about it. Here are some things you can do to make it easier.

Consider whether you're the right person to have the conversation. Perhaps the person you're concerned about will find it easier to be open with another family member or friend about any memory problems they're having.

Pick your moment. Find a quiet time and place when the person is relaxed and you're unlikely to be interrupted or distracted.

Choose your words carefully. When you explain your concerns, try to be reassuring and non-judgemental. Questions that can help start a conversation include:

'Is there anything you've been worried about lately?'

'Have you been feeling any different?'

'Have you noticed any changes in yourself?'

Try to be specific by using examples. Eg. 'I noticed that you were struggling to use the TV remote control yesterday.' Or, 'Last week, when you were filling in a form, you couldn't remember our home address.'

Talking to your GP if you're worried about your memory

If you've noticed that you're unusually forgetful or confused – or someone else has – talk to your GP sooner rather than later.

Be specific and honest. Tell the doctor what problems you're having, how long you've been having them and how often they occur. Give examples, such as 'I got lost in an area I'm very familiar with'.

At your appointment, the doctor might also:

- ask you to do a short memory/mental ability test
- check you out for any physical illnesses, which may be the cause of your symptoms
- take samples of blood or urine to test for other illnesses which can resemble dementia
- talk to your friends and family about any changes they have noticed in you.

If the doctor thinks you might have dementia, you'll be referred to a memory clinic or hospital to see a consultant or other specialist.

The doctor is there to help you. If you're not happy with their response, you can ask to be referred to a specialist.

If you're diagnosed with dementia, there's lots of advice and support available to help you live well with the condition.

Talking to your friends and neighbours

The more we know and talk about dementia, the less fearful and more accepting we'll be. Here are some of the things we're doing to get people talking.

Dementia-friendly communities

Alzheimer's Society is leading on creating dementia-friendly communities across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. These are communities where people understand dementia, how it impacts on the lives of those affected, and the small things they can do to make a difference.

By simply talking about dementia to your friends, neighbours and colleagues, you can help more people become aware of and understand the condition. Talking helps dispel common myths and misconceptions too. For example, many people think dementia is a natural part of growing old, but it's actually caused by diseases of the brain.

There's a booklet and short film to help you, called Five things you should know about dementia, available from [alzheimers.org.uk/talkdementia](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/talkdementia) Please share this link through your social networks to help spread the word.

Dementia Friends

In England, we're aiming to create a network of a million Dementia Friends in communities across the country. A Dementia Friend learns a little bit more about what it's like to live with dementia and then turns that understanding into action. From helping someone to find the right bus to spreading the word about dementia on social media, every action counts.

If you're interested in becoming a Dementia Friend, go to **dementiafriends.org.uk**



Talking to us

Alzheimer's Society understands dementia. We're here for you – and there are lots of ways we can help:

National Dementia Helpline

If you have questions or concerns about any type of dementia and would like information and support, call our trained advisers on **0300 222 1122** or email **helpline@alzheimers.org.uk**

We're open 9am–5pm, Monday to Friday and 10am–4pm, Saturday and Sunday.

Talking Point

Our online support and discussion forum is for anyone affected by dementia. It's a place to ask for advice, share information, join in discussions and get the support you need.

alzheimers.org.uk

Our website has information on all aspects of dementia – from symptoms and diagnosis to care and support.

Alzheimer's Society in your area

There's a wide range of local support for people with dementia and their carers. To find out about services in your area, go to **www.alzheimers.org.uk/localinfo**