

# Recognizing the Early Signs of Dementia



Watching a loved one experience symptoms of Alzheimer's disease or dementia is difficult – but the sooner you take action, the better. If you notice any of the following symptoms, don't ignore them:

- Confusion, particularly related to time or place
- Changes in mood or personality
- Difficulty remembering new information
- Growing depressed and withdrawn
- Trouble problem-solving
- Increased anxiety
- Trouble communicating (verbally or written)
- Getting lost, especially on one's way to familiar places
- Routinely misplacing commonly used items
- Exhibiting signs of paranoia
- Exercising poor judgment

## **An Empathy-Based Approach to Memory Care**

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# Age-Related Memory Loss vs. Dementia



Is it normal forgetfulness or something more serious? Learn the key differences between age-related memory loss and dementia.

## Age-Related Memory Loss:

- Forgetting the day occasionally but figuring it out later
- Becoming irritated when their normal routine is altered
- Occasionally losing an item

## Dementia:

- Completely losing track of the day or season
- Getting extremely agitated when there is a small change in a routine
- Putting items in strange places and being unable to find them

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## Let's Talk About Dementia: 5 Tips to Navigate Meaningful Conversations



Communicating with a loved one who is living with dementia or Alzheimer's disease can be challenging. These five tips can help you connect, remain calm, and navigate positive conversations:

1. Listen carefully and pay attention to your loved one's body language.
2. Don't ask too many questions. Focus on individual topics and avoid open-ended questions.
3. Avoid conflict. Validate their feelings. Don't yell or express anger.
4. Use humor and laugh together to help break any tension.
5. Encourage positive engagement by playing your loved one's favorite music.

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## Planning for the Future With Dementia



A diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or dementia can be overwhelming. Here are five tips to help begin planning:

1. Schedule a visit with your health care provider and discuss building a health care team.
2. Educate yourself and others about Alzheimer's disease and dementia.  
Explore local resources and support groups.
3. Develop a support system, and don't hesitate to ask family and friends for help.
4. Consult with elder law professionals to create smart financial and legal plans.
5. Create a flexible care plan to meet evolving needs.

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# A Dementia Diagnosis: 10 Questions to Ask Your Doctor



A diagnosis of dementia or Alzheimer's disease can be overwhelming for the entire family. Learn the key questions to ask your family's physician to help navigate the emotional and physical aspects of the diagnosis.

## Key questions to ask your family's physician:

1. What type of dementia does my loved one have?
2. How far has the dementia progressed?
3. What symptoms and changes should we anticipate?
4. What medications do you recommend?
5. What other treatments may help slow the decline?
6. Should my mother or father still drive?
7. Is living at home still an option?
8. In what ways can I help?
9. What specialists should we see?
10. What resources are available to help support my family?

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## Genetics and Alzheimer's Disease



Does Alzheimer's run in the family? According to the Alzheimer's Association, two categories of genes can influence whether a person develops the disease: risk genes and deterministic genes. Researchers have identified hereditary Alzheimer's genes in both categories, and genetic tests are available to determine if you may have them.

**Consult with a medical professional, or visit the Alzheimer's Association ([alz.org](https://www.alz.org)) to learn more.**

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## Driving With Dementia: Is It Safe?



When a loved one with dementia is no longer able to make good decisions on the road, it may be time for them to stop driving. Learn common signs that a person shouldn't be behind the wheel, and consult your family physician for additional guidance.

### Know the signs:

1. Increased accidents or unexplained damage.
2. Confusion over colors, words, and standard road rules.
3. Confusing the brake and gas pedals.
4. Getting lost in familiar places.
5. Uncharacteristic episodes of anger or road rage.

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# Dementia and the Power of Socialization



Staying socially active and engaging with friends and family on a regular basis can help support brain health for loved ones living with Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

## Here are five reasons why:

1. Social interaction may slow symptoms and cognitive decline associated with dementia and Alzheimer's disease.
2. Individuals living with dementia may revert to living in the past, but socialization can provide structure and help the brain connect to the present.
3. Social interaction and regular physical activity help keep the blood flowing and can increase the chemicals that protect the brain.
4. Staying socially engaged can help boost self-esteem, which may translate to better eating habits, more exercise, and better sleep.
5. Increased social engagement can help minimize an individual's sense of loneliness, isolation, stress, and other factors that may contribute to cognitive decline.

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## Is It Time to Consider Memory Care?



It's not easy to pinpoint when it's time for memory care. Learn the five signs that indicate a loved one with dementia or Alzheimer's disease may need support in a specialized memory care setting:

1. Changes in behavior become unmanageable in the current home environment.
2. Confusion and disorientation that jeopardizes their physical safety or someone else's safety.
3. They experience a decline in physical health that affects their abilities.
4. Their primary caregiver experiences burnout or is unable to provide the emotional and physical support needed.
5. Isolation occurs as they become disinterested in hobbies or activities that once brought them joy and purpose.

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## Getting the Help You Need



When a loved one receives a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or dementia, the entire family is affected. Learn how to find support and resources where you live:

- Family members, friends, and neighbors can work together to share responsibilities and provide breaks for the primary caregiver.
- Geriatric care managers are professionals who can suggest needed services and help you get them.
- Health care providers who specialize in dementia care understand the disease and level of care needed. These professionals can offer recommendations on how to meet those needs.
- Mental health professionals and social workers can provide emotional support, and help develop plans and strategies to manage caregiver stress.

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## 5 Tips to Avoid Caregiver Burnout



Maintaining your own well-being is a vital part of being a better and healthier caregiver. Follow these five tips to protect yourself from burnout:

1. Manage stress levels with breathing exercises, meditation, and other relaxation techniques.
2. Take a break when you need one, and ask family and friends for help.
3. Seek professional help if you're experiencing stress and depression.
4. Eat well, get plenty of rest, engage in physical activity, and dedicate time to your favorite activities and hobbies.
5. Attend a caregiver support group and connect with others. Visit the Alzheimer's Association ([alz.org](http://alz.org)) for resources, and contact your local Watermark community about upcoming support groups.

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## Engagement Matters: 3 Reasons Why



When a loved one is living with Alzheimer's disease or dementia, social engagement is vital. Here are three reasons why:

1. Individuals with dementia may experience high stress and agitation. Going outdoors can allow for mood enhancement, lowered stress levels, and a lifted spirit.
2. Being in familiar places outside of the home can offer a sense of comfort, inspiring feelings of nostalgia, engaging the senses, and boosting well-being.
3. Going out into society decreases feelings of isolation often experienced by people living with memory loss.

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