

*Welcome to our Health Promotion
Patient Education Forum on the:*

Understanding Dementia.

A Guide for Patients and Carers

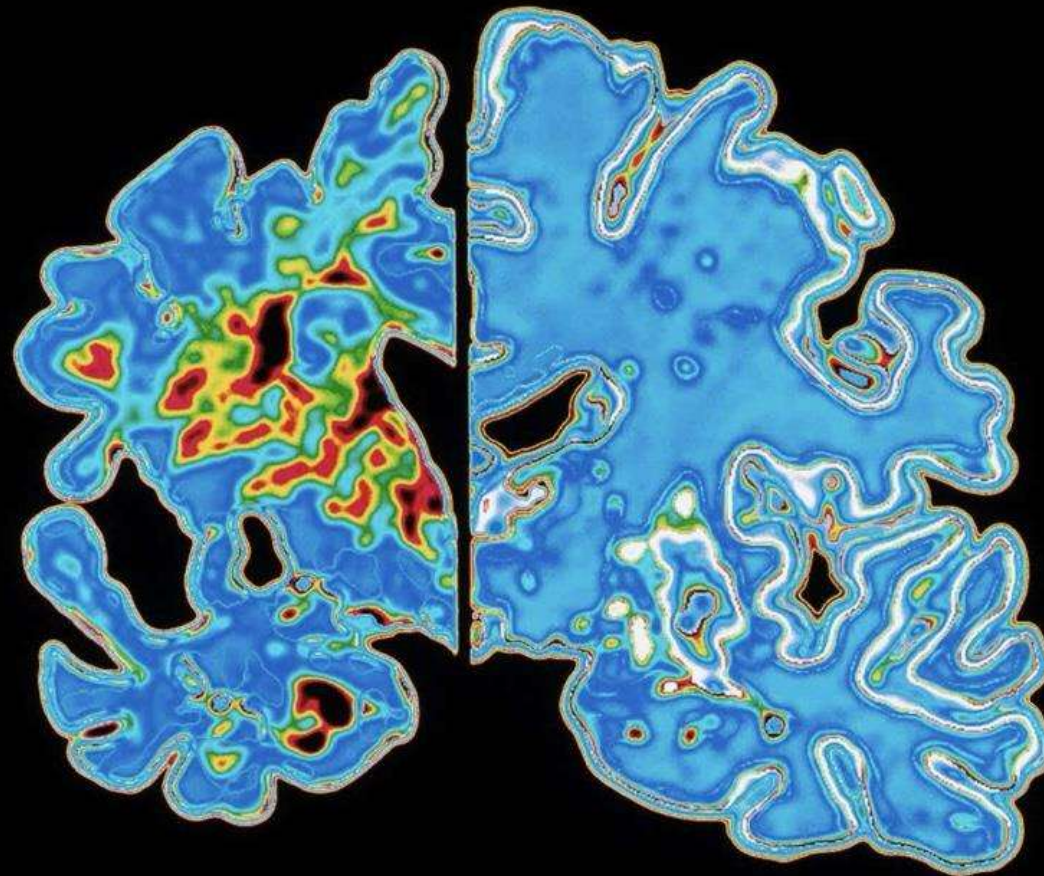
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What is Dementia?

Dementia is not a single disease – it's an umbrella term for symptoms affecting:

- Memory
- Thinking and reasoning
- Communication and language
- Ability to carry out daily activities

Dementia is caused by damage to brain cells, affecting their ability to communicate with each other.



▲ Compared with the brain's usual state (right), that of a person with Alzheimer's is shrunken (left) due to the degeneration and death of nerve cells

Alfred Pasiaka/Science Photo Library

Common Types of Dementia

- **Alzheimer's Disease (60-70% of cases)** Most common type, with gradual memory loss and confusion
- **Vascular Dementia (20% of cases)** Caused by reduced blood flow to the brain, often after strokes
- **Lewy Body Dementia** Includes visual hallucinations and movement problems
- **Frontotemporal Dementia** Affects personality, behaviour, and language

How to Recognize Dementia

(For Patients)

Early warning signs you might notice:

- **Memory loss** that disrupts daily life, especially forgetting recently learned information
- **Difficulty planning** or solving problems (managing bills, following recipes)
- **Confusion with time or place** – losing track of dates or where you are
- **Trouble with words** in speaking or writing, or calling things by wrong names
- **Misplacing things** and being unable to retrace steps
- **Poor or decreased judgement**
- **Withdrawal** from social activities or hobbies
- **Changes in mood** or personality

How to Recognize Dementia (For Carers)

What family members and carers may notice:

- Asking the same questions repeatedly
- Getting lost in familiar places
- Difficulty following conversations or TV programmes
- Struggling with familiar tasks (making tea, using the phone)
- Forgetting appointments or events
- Changes in personality – becoming suspicious, anxious, or withdrawn
- Poor hygiene or wearing inappropriate clothing

Important: If you notice these signs, encourage your loved one to see their GP.

Early diagnosis helps with planning and accessing support.

Getting a diagnosis

- Referral to Camden memory service (usually aged over 65), or cognitive disorders clinic Queen Square
- In clinic in Peckwater Centre or a home visit
- Blood tests usually done before to exclude other causes of the symptoms
- Head scan usually arranged by memory service
- Memory service team help support patient and carer

Treatments: *What's Available*

Currently, there is no cure for dementia, but treatments can help manage symptoms and improve quality of life.

Medications:

- Cholinesterase inhibitors (Donepezil, Rivastigmine, Galantamine)– for mild to moderate Alzheimer's
- Memantine – for moderate to severe Alzheimer's
- These can help with memory and thinking for a time, though they don't stop progression

Non-drug treatments:

- Cognitive stimulation therapy
- Reminiscence therapy
- Physical exercise and activity
- Social engagement

Managing Symptoms and Behaviours

Medications may also help with:

- Depression and anxiety
- Sleep disturbances
- Agitation (used cautiously)

Support Services: We can refer you to the memory clinic, and local support groups.

Treatment plans are tailored to each individual. We'll work with you to find what helps most.

Legal Matters: Planning Ahead

It's important to address legal matters early, while the person still has capacity

1. Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA)

Two types available:

- **Property and Financial Affairs** – managing money, bills, property
- **Health and Welfare** – decisions about medical care, living arrangements

Cost: £82 per LPA (reductions available for low income)

Legal Matters: Other Important Documents

- 2. **Will** Ensure your wishes for assets and dependents are recorded
- 3. **Advance Decision (Living Will)** Specifies which medical treatments you would refuse
- 4. **Advance Statement** Records your preferences for future care

Key point: These documents must be completed while the person has mental capacity to make decisions.

We can assess capacity or refer to specialists if needed.

Resources: [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) for LPA information, [Citizens Advice](https://citizensadvice.org.uk), or consult a solicitor

Financial Support and Benefits

People with dementia and their carers may be entitled to:

- **Attendance Allowance** (65+ who need help with personal care)
- **Personal Independence Payment** (under 65)
- **Carer's Allowance** (for carers providing 35+ hours of care per week)
- **Council Tax reduction**
- **Blue Badge** for parking
- **NHS Continuing Healthcare** (for complex health needs)

Contact your local authority social services (usually Camden Adult Social Care) for a care needs assessment. They can advise on funding for home care, day centres, or residential care.

How to Prevent Dementia: *The Evidence*

Good news!









Up to 40% of dementia cases may be preventable or delayed through lifestyle changes.

Key risk factors you can modify:

- Physical inactivity
- Smoking
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- High blood pressure
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Depression
- Social isolation
- Hearing loss (untreated)

Prevention: What You Can Do

Practical steps to reduce your risk:

-  **Stay Physically Active** Aim for 150 minutes of moderate exercise weekly – walking, swimming, gardening
-  **Keep Your Brain Active** Reading, puzzles, learning new skills, social activities
-  **Eat a Healthy Diet** Mediterranean-style diet: fish, olive oil, vegetables, fruits, nuts
-  **Manage Heart Health** Control blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes. What's good for the heart is good for the brain.
-  **Stop Smoking** We can help with smoking cessation support
-  **Limit Alcohol** Maximum 14 units per week, spread across the week
-  **Protect Your Hearing** Get hearing tested and use hearing aids if needed
-  **Stay Socially Connected** Regular contact with friends, family, and community groups

Key Messages to Remember

- ✓ **Early diagnosis matters** – if you're concerned, see your GP
- ✓ **Treatment and support are available** – you're not alone
- ✓ **Plan ahead** – sort out legal matters while you have capacity
- ✓ **Prevention is possible** – lifestyle changes can reduce risk
- ✓ **Focus on quality of life** – living well with dementia is possible

**We're here to support you every step of the way.
Please don't hesitate to book an appointment if you have
concerns or questions.**

Useful Resources

- **Alzheimer's Society** National Dementia Helpline: 0333 150 3456
Website: alzheimers.org.uk
- **Dementia UK** Admiral Nurse Helpline: 0800 888 6678 Website: dementiauk.org
- **Age UK** Helpline: 0800 678 1602 Website: ageuk.org.uk
- **NHS** Website: nhs.uk/conditions/dementia
- **Citizens Advice** For legal and financial guidance Website: citizensadvice.org.uk

Questions?

Thank you for attending
Please feel free to ask any questions