

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

Understanding Dementia.

A Guide for Patients and Carers

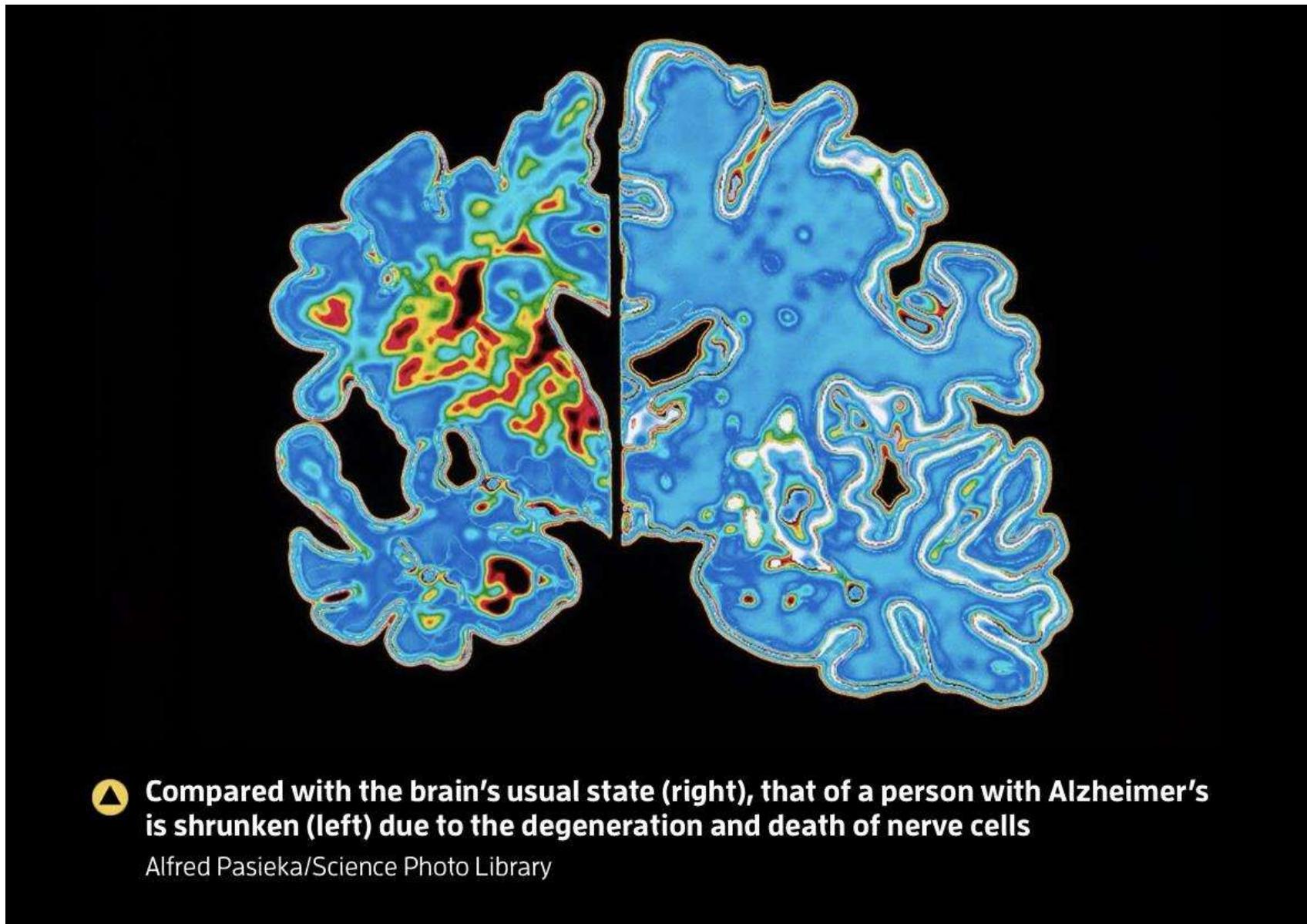
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What is Dementia?

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 Pasieka/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- Changes in personality – becoming suspicious, anxious, or withdrawn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 for LPA information, Citizens Advice, 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