

# Living with Dementia

Information for people living with dementia and their carers

## Vulnerable Adults Team

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### What is dementia?

Dementia is an umbrella term for a group of diseases that causes a decline in memory which impacts; problem solving, communication and the ability to perform everyday activities.

Dementia is a progressive condition. However, it is different for every person. Dementia is one of the main causes of disability in later life, with more people having a dementia diagnosis than heart failure or stroke. It is estimated that 1 in 6 people living with dementia in the UK will go undiagnosed.

### Types of dementia

There are many types of dementia that affect individuals. The main types of dementia are:

- **Alzheimer's** - this is the most common type of Dementia. People may have difficulty remembering locations, significant events, remembering words or familiar faces.
- **Vascular Dementia** - this is the second most common dementia which causes damage to the blood supply to the brain. This makes everyday activities challenging.
- **Mixed Dementia** - a term used to describe people who have Alzheimer's and Vascular Dementia combined.
- **Lewy Bodies** - affects 10% of people with dementia which may cause hallucinations and symptoms similar to Parkinson's disease.
- **Frontal Lobe** - is less common and affects two parts of the brain, the frontal and temporal lobes. People may experience changes in personality resulting in inappropriate behaviour, lack of engagement, agitation and aggression.

### Symptoms of Dementia

There are many signs and symptoms that may occur. People may experience memory problems such as misplacing items, unable to remember new and eventually past events, changes in personality including unexplained outbursts.

## **Living with Dementia**

Many people who experience Dementia are able to live and carry out everyday activities with the aid of support. There is no cure for dementia but there are things you can do to help reduce further development and keep the brain active.

- Stop smoking.
- Maintain a healthy dietary intake.
- Exercise.
- Keep socially active by doing puzzles and new challenges to keep the brain active.
- Walking and outdoor activities.
- Don't become isolative and always seek support.

## **What is the next step?**

What is the next step? If you are concerned that you may be experiencing symptoms related to Dementia, seeking advice, support and getting an early diagnosis is important. Make an appointment with your GP to discuss any concerns or symptoms you may be experiencing. The GP will then make an assessment and possibly refer to memory services or other specialists for a more detailed assessment. This may include detailed tests and brain scans.

If you are a patient in hospital or have a friend or family member present then a professional such as a nurse or doctor can carry out an assessment called, The Abbreviated Mental Test Score (AMTS). This is an assessment for rapidly assessing older adult patients for the possibility of dementia. Measuring dementia is a national requirement that needs to be in place and is essential for patients aged 65+ to determine early diagnosis and support.

If cognitive impairment is detected, your GP will be notified and an appointment will be made for a further follow up. This may include a referral to a memory clinic or services.

## **Additional information and Contacts**

**Our hospital's Dementia Liaison Nurse**  
**swbh-alert-safeguarding@nhs.net**

**Patient Experience Team**  
**swb-tr.pals@nhs.net**

**BUDS (Better understanding of dementia for Sandwell)**  
**0121 565 3721**

**Sandwell Community Dementia Service**  
**01902 826 655**

**Dementia UK Admiral nursing direct**  
**0845 2579 406**  
**direct@dementia.org**

**Alzheimer's Society Birmingham**  
**0121 449 699**

**The Dementia Society Dementia Support Line 0333 150 3456**

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