

# ABOUT YOU... WHAT IS DEMENTIA?

If you have been diagnosed with dementia, this Help Sheet may be useful. It talks about dementia and where you can go for further information.

## What is dementia?

Dementia is the term used to describe the symptoms of a large group of illnesses which cause a progressive decline in a person's functioning.

### Early symptoms of dementia include difficulties with:

- Remembering, particularly recent events
- Making decisions
- Expressing your thoughts
- Understanding what others are saying
- Finding your way around
- Performing more complex tasks
- Managing finances

## Who gets dementia?

Dementia can happen to anyone, but it is more common after the age of 65. Three in ten people over the age of 85 and almost one in ten people over 65 have dementia.

A diagnosis of dementia under the age of 65 (called younger onset dementia) can affect people in their 30s, 40s and 50s.

## Are there any treatments for dementia?

At present there is no cure for most forms of dementia. However, medications and alternative treatments have been found to relieve some of the symptoms for some people. Your doctor or specialist can advise you about these treatments.

## Are there different types of dementia?

Yes, there are various types of dementia. The effects of the different types of dementia are similar, but not identical, as each one tends to affect different parts of the brain.

### Some of the most common forms of dementia are:

- Alzheimer's disease
- Vascular dementia
- Lewy body disease
- Frontotemporal dementia
- Alcohol related dementia (usually known as Wernicke-Korsakoff's Syndrome)

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia.

## What can I do?

You may have been wondering what is happening to you for some time now, and have probably been worried and anxious about the changes you've noticed.

Certainly being diagnosed with dementia is upsetting. For some people who have been worried about themselves for some time, the diagnosis can come as a relief. They know that they have an illness, and this can help them cope more easily. It also enables them to start planning ahead.

**FIGHTDEMENTIA.ORG.AU**    **NATIONAL DEMENTIA HELPLINE 1800 100 500**

## Start by contacting Alzheimer's Australia

Alzheimer's Australia provides a range of services to support people with all types of dementia and their families, as the condition progresses.

### Alzheimer's Australia can help you with:

- Information about dementia
- Support groups for people who have been diagnosed with dementia
- Private and confidential counselling
- Other programs and services in your local area

## Tell the people close to you

When you're ready it is important to tell your family and friends that you have dementia, if they do not already know. It may be a challenge to tell others because such a diagnosis is hard to come to terms with for everyone involved. But it is better that people close to you are clear about it, so that they can have time to adjust, find out more about dementia and how best to support you. Alzheimer's Australia has produced a Help Sheet especially for family and friends, which provides information about dementia and ways to help.

Contact the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500** if you would like some copies for your family and friends.

## It is important to know that:

- You are still the same person
- The changes you are experiencing are because of a condition of the brain – dementia
- You will have good days and bad days
- Each person is affected differently and symptoms will vary
- You are not alone. There are people who understand what you are going through and can help
- There are ways to cope better, now and later on

You may feel angry, frustrated or upset about the changes in your life. Talking about these feelings with a trusted family member, friend or Alzheimer's Australia counsellor, or asking for information, may help. Alzheimer's Australia can help with some tips. Contact the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**.

### Based on:

*I'm told I have dementia,*  
Alzheimer's Society, UK

*Just for you,*  
Alzheimer's Society of Canada

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Alzheimer's Australia offers support, information, education and counselling. Contact the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**, or visit our website at [fightdementia.org.au](http://fightdementia.org.au)



For language assistance phone the Translating and Interpreting Service on **131 450**