

Living well with dementia

Keeping well and staying independent

This booklet will cover:

- Medication
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle:
 - Diet and nutrition
 - Alcohol and smoking
 - Keep active
 - Getting around
 - Dementia-friendly holidays
 - Staying socially active
- Staying independent
- Care and support

Dementia will change your life and the lives of those around you

In most cases, it is not known exactly what causes dementia. However, research suggests that diet and lifestyle, as well as age, are likely to be important factors.

You will need to plan ahead, to make important decisions about:

- Where to live and when to move, if the need arises
- How to get the support that you may need

Medication

There is no cure for dementia and no medicine that will reverse dementia, but there are medicines that may slow down the progression of the condition.

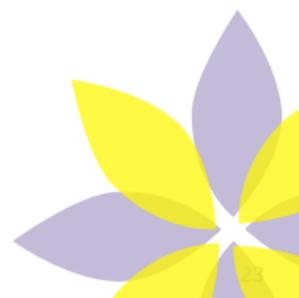
Medication

There are some medicines that may be used to help in some causes of dementia. Medication is usually used for two reasons:

- As treatment to help with symptoms that affect thinking and memory
- As treatment to help with symptoms that affect mood and how someone behaves

Speak to your GP or other medical professional about what medication is best for you. The Alzheimer's Society also has a "Drug treatments for Alzheimer's disease" factsheet on its website (www.alzheimers.org.uk) that includes a list of questions to ask your GP.

All medications can cause side effects and many can react to other underlying conditions. Be aware that common side effects of medications are dizziness, constipation, a dry mouth or nausea - don't be alarmed and think that it is connected to your dementia - talk to your medical professional.



Monitoring

Whatever treatment or medication you are prescribed, you will be regularly monitored by your GP, specialist clinics or health professionals. It is important, also, for you to regularly monitor how you feel.

To help give an accurate account you might find it useful to keep a diary. This will be useful for your medical professionals, giving them an understanding of your wellbeing; and if necessary, make any medication adjustments.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle

Maintaining your wellbeing is important and minor adjustments in your current lifestyle may have a positive impact on your dementia.

Keeping well and active

A healthy diet, regular activity and maintaining social interaction are important for everybody. So it's a good idea to pay attention to:

- What we eat
- What we drink
- Making sure that we keep both our bodies and minds active.

This section gives advice on:

- Diet and nutrition
- Alcohol and smoking
- Keeping active
- Staying socially active

Diet and nutrition

A good balanced diet and hydration are essential for everyone's wellbeing.

Eating well with dementia

As your dementia progresses, your eating and drinking preferences and habits may change. Dementia can change how flavours are recognised. Taste and sense of smell change naturally with the ageing process.

What to eat

A good diet doesn't just help keep us healthy; it also helps us feel better. If we feel better, we are more likely to find it easier to stick to a good diet.

The two keys to a healthy diet are:

1. Eating the right amount of food for your level of activity - to avoid either putting on weight or losing weight if you don't need to. Keep an eye on whether your clothes are becoming too tight or too loose.
2. Eating a wide range of foods. This means you will get a balanced diet and your body is receiving all the nutrients it needs.

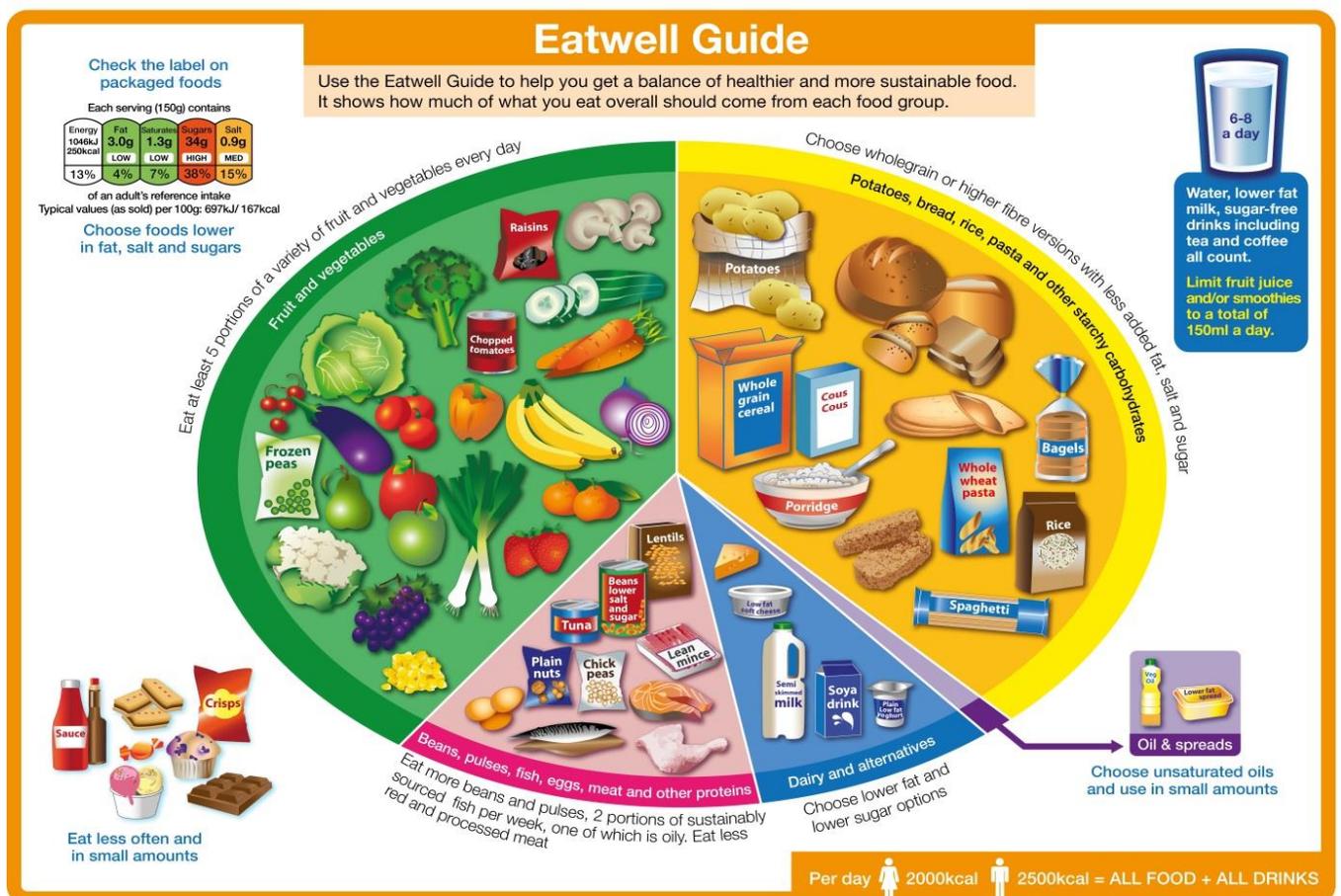
General advice

Be active - this doesn't have to mean joining the gym. Incorporate a bit of exercise into your daily activities, by using the stairs instead of the lift, for example, or walking to the local shops. This will help you to maintain a healthy weight and may reduce the risk of heart disease or developing type 2 diabetes.



Drink more non-alcoholic drinks – not sugary drinks though. Stick to one glass (150 ml) of unsweetened fruit juice per day. Water and lower-fat milk are good options. Drink around 6-8 glasses (a total of around 1500 ml, about 2½ pints) a day to stop getting dehydrated. This will be higher on warm days or when you are more active.

Eat breakfast - it actually helps control your weight. Wholegrain, low-sugar cereals, toast and fruit provide good nutrients to get you going. Skipping breakfast means you're tempted to snack later on.



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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The Eatwell Guide

The Eatwell Guide from **Public Health England** highlights the different types of food that make up our diet (including drinks), and shows the proportions we should eat them in to have a healthy, balanced diet:

Based on the Eatwell Guide, to have a healthy diet:

- Include at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Base meals on potatoes, bread, rice, pasta or other starchy foods (carbohydrates). Choose wholegrain versions where possible.
- Have some dairy or dairy alternatives (such as soya drinks). Choose lower fat and lower sugar options.

- Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins (including 2 portions of fish every week, one of which should be oily).
- Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat them in small amounts.
- Drink 6-8 cups/glasses of fluid a day.
- If consuming food and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar have these less often and in small amounts.

It's a good idea to try to get this balance right every day, but you don't need to do it at every meal. You might find it easier to get the balance right over a longer period, like a week. Try to choose options that are lower in salt when you can.

You can read more about the Eatwell Guide and healthy eating at the NHS Choices website (www.nhs.uk).

Five tips on healthy eating:

1. About one third of the food that you eat should be starchy foods - this food group includes bread, potatoes, rice, cereals and pasta. Wholegrain varieties have more fibre. They're a good source of energy plus a range of nutrients.
2. Include five portions of different types of fruit and veg in your food each day – a glass of unsweetened fruit juice (150 ml) can count as one portion. Vegetables within a dish (such as a casserole) all count. It's a good idea to try swapping snacks for a piece of fruit.
3. Eat more fish - fresh, frozen or canned. Just remember that canned and smoked fish can be high in salt. Fish is a good source of protein, vitamins and minerals. Aim for two fish meals a week, including one with oily fish, such as salmon, mackerel and sardines. These are higher in omega-3 fats and may help to prevent heart disease.
4. Hold back on salt - much of the food we buy, such as bread, cereals and cakes already contains salt. Too much salt can increase blood pressure.
5. Hold back on fats and sugars - we all need some fat but often we eat the wrong sort. Avoid eating too much saturated fat as it can raise the level of cholesterol in your blood, increasing your risk of developing heart disease. Saturated fats are found in many foods e.g. hard cheese, cakes, biscuits, sausages, cream, butter, lard and pies. Choose foods that contain unsaturated fats, such as vegetable oils, nuts and oily fish. It's also a good idea to cut down on the amount of fat used in cooking. Choose lean cuts of meat and to trim off visible fat. Sugar is found in many foods and drinks. It's a good idea to cut down on cakes, sweetened breakfast cereals, sugary drinks and alcohol. In excess they contribute to weight gain and tooth decay. Better to get sugar naturally, from fruit, for example.

Nutritional supplements

If you eat a healthy and balanced diet you should be getting all the nutrients you need. There is no direct evidence that taking nutritional supplements (vitamins, minerals, herbs, plant extracts) will reduce your risk of getting dementia. If you feel that your diet would benefit from taking supplements seek medical advice.

If you can't maintain a healthy diet because of illness or for any other reason you should consult your GP for advice.

Alcohol and smoking

A glass of wine, a gin and tonic, or a pint of beer can be a nice way to relax. But when drinking starts to become too regular and too much, it can seriously affect our health.

Alcohol

Moderation is the key for alcohol consumption. It is generally recommended that women should not regularly drink more than one or two small glasses of wine a day. Men should not regularly drink more than one pint of strong lager/ beer a day. If you are concerned about your alcohol intake you should contact your GP.

If you are taking any medication you should check with your GP regarding any possible side-effects with alcohol.

Risks associated with chronic alcohol use

Regularly drinking more than the healthy guidelines over a number of years can cause damage. Consuming large quantities of alcohol over a short period of time, then not drinking for several days, can be equally as damaging. Excessive alcohol consumption can also cause:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Cancer, including breast, throat and liver cancer
- Liver cirrhosis (irreversible scarring of the liver)
- Poor sleep
- Fatigue or depression
- Weight gain or loss

Smoking

Smoking harms practically every part of your body. It causes deaths from lung cancer, bronchitis, emphysema, and heart disease. More than a quarter of all cancer deaths can be attributed to smoking.



It's not too late to quit

Smoking reduces quality of life and life expectancy. So there really is no sensible reason not to give up.

The younger a person quits, the greater the benefits but stopping smoking at any age is going to improve your health. Within a year of giving up smoking, your risk of a heart attack drops to half that of a smoker's.

It's never too late to give up smoking. There's plenty of free help and support at NHS Smokefree (www.nhs.uk/smokefree).



Physical activity benefits for adults and older adults

-  **BENEFITS HEALTH**
-  **IMPROVES SLEEP**
-  **MAINTAINS HEALTHY WEIGHT**
-  **MANAGES STRESS**
-  **IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE**

REDUCES YOUR CHANCE OF

Type II Diabetes	-40%
Cardiovascular Disease	-35%
Falls, Depression and Dementia	-30%
Joint and Back Pain	-25%
Cancers (Colon and Breast)	-20%

What should you do?

For a healthy heart and mind

To keep your muscles, bones and joints strong

To reduce your chance of falls

Be Active

Sit Less

Build Strength

Improve Balance

VIGOROUS

MODERATE



MINUTES PER WEEK

75 OR 150

VIGOROUS INTENSITY

(BREATHING FAST
DIFFICULTY TALKING)

MODERATE INTENSITY

(INCREASED BREATHING
ABLE TO TALK)

OR A COMBINATION OF BOTH

BREAK UP SITTING TIME



2 DAYS PER WEEK

Something is better than nothing.

Start small and build up gradually:
just 10 minutes at a time provides benefit.

MAKE A START TODAY: it's never too late!

Keeping active

Remaining physically active is not only good for your general health but also has a significant impact on your well-being.



Keeping active improves your mood, and helps you relax and sleep better. It's also a very positive thing to do and reminds you that life can be fun and enjoyable. It could be something simple like going for a walk or more structured such as going swimming, dancing or bowling.

When we think about keeping active we usually think of physical exercise. We forget the importance of exercising the mind. Research has shown that for the best overall feeling of wellbeing we need to exercise both our bodies and our minds.

Physical activity

Physical activity is anything that gets you moving around and your heart and pulse pumping a bit faster than usual. It can be everyday tasks, such as cleaning the house, gardening or walking the dog. Or it can be specific exercises such as keep fit, swimming, golf, tennis or going to the gym. It can also be enjoyable social activities such as walking and dancing.

The best type of activity is one that makes you feel slightly warmer and breathe a bit heavier, which shows that your heart is working just that little bit harder. Don't feel you have to set aside huge amounts of time to exercise. Doing a little each day, or every other day, is just as good. It's recommended that the average adult should try and do 30 minutes of exercise five days a week (or 150 minutes in total a week). But that 30 minutes could be broken down into 10-minute slots.

Benefits of keeping active

- Reduced risk of developing heart disease, a stroke or other life-threatening illness
- Greater likelihood of maintaining or reaching a healthy weight
- Greater sense of calm and well-being
- Improved sleep and increased day-time vitality

If you stay physically active, you're also likely to stay independent for longer. Exercise can make you stronger. You'll feel more confident and involved in life. Remember, before beginning a new exercise regime, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor first.

If you have an inactive lifestyle, you're at greater risk of:

- Heart disease
- Some cancers
- Diabetes
- Osteoporosis, leading to fractures (half the number of hip fractures could be avoided with regular physical activity)
- Obesity and related health problems

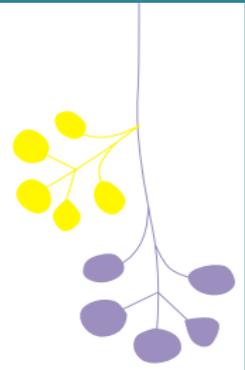
Find out more from the NHS Choices website's **Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults**. You will also find links to other support information about getting active.

Keeping your mind active

Memory loss does not have to be an inevitable part of ageing. Studies show that lifestyle factors probably play an important role in helping prevent cognitive decline - in particular, a nutritious diet, physical exercise, lack of stress, and mental and social stimulation. The good thing is that these are all things we can do something about. So it's just as important to keep your mind as active as your body.



Think of it this way: the brain is like a muscle; it needs regular workouts. Keeping your mind active will help you feel more alert and happier. The brain is made up of thousands of nerve cells with connections between them. Mentally stimulating activities strengthen these cells and the connections between them, and may even create new nerve cells.



Don't take up activities which you don't like or find difficult, just because you feel you should. Choose things that you enjoy and suit your abilities. That way, you will look forward to doing them. You may find you can't so easily do the things you used to do, but that doesn't mean you have to give up on everything. Focus on what you can do rather than what you can't. So think what it was you enjoyed about those activities, and see what else is similar. For example, you might find it hard to play the piano, but you could try listening to music, going to concerts or joining a choir.

Here are a few more suggestions:

Keep up your social life and engage in plenty of stimulating conversations

Join a new club or society, and meet new people

Arrange regular social outings or get-togethers: going to a football match, playing with the grandchildren, going out for meals, gallery or museum visits

Learn something new – crafts, hobbies

Read newspapers, magazines and books - talk about the articles and books with friends and family

Play games like Scrabble, cards and chess

Do crossword puzzles, Sudoku and word games

Do some volunteering work - charity shop, church, local club or sports centre

Keeping working

If you're able to keep working, it can be very helpful, not just from a financial point of view. Many people find it makes them feel good about themselves. It can give a sense of achievement, and a structure to the day. It also keeps you involved with friends and colleagues.

However, if paid work proves too difficult, don't give up. Consider voluntary work. This is not only extremely worthwhile and likely to give you a real sense of achievement, but could also be more flexible, so you can work the hours that suit you. It is also likely to be a way of making new friends and learning new skills.

Trying new things

Now could be the perfect time to take up a new hobby or interest. Perhaps something you've been meaning to try for ages - learning to sing, paint or play bowls. Maybe you can no longer go rock-climbing but that's no reason to give up on enjoying life. Try something new. It will not only set you new physical and mental challenges but it will also give you the opportunity to develop as a person and could lead to new social circles.

Remember, it's never too late to try something new.

What's on in your area?

To find out what sort of things are going on in your area - from sport to dance, joining a walking group to volunteering - try your local library, local council website, neighbourhood organisations, local newspapers and church noticeboards.

The NHS-backed Change4Life website is also a great source of ideas (www.nhs.uk/change4life).

Getting around

Getting around may become harder as your dementia progresses and you may need more support.

Planning a journey

There are lots of alternative ways of getting around, plus organisations that can help. Plan your journey carefully, with plenty of rest breaks, and check for roadworks.

You may be eligible for a RADAR key, giving you entry to over 9,000 accessible public toilets for people with disabilities. To find out more about RADAR keys or to buy a key online, go to Disability Rights UK's website (www.disabilityrightsuk.org). You may find that your local council provides a free key. Beware of unofficial sellers offering cheap copies online.



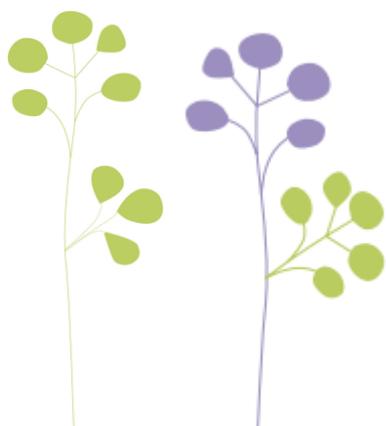
Driving and dementia

Having dementia does not necessarily mean you have to give up driving. However, you must tell both the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) and your insurance company that you have been diagnosed. For more information on this, you can read the **Who you must tell?** section of Dementia Care's **Diagnosed with dementia?** booklet.

Ask someone you trust to tell you when they feel you should stop driving because you are no longer safe. Write down this request now, so that they can show you this instruction later, in case you don't remember asking them. Try to be open-minded and listen to what they say.

If you do decide to keep driving, be sensible:

- Stick to routes you know well
- Avoid busy roads at busy times of day
- Avoid driving at night or in bad weather
- Don't drive when you're tired



The Blue Badge system

In some circumstances, you might be eligible for the UK's Blue Badge Scheme. This scheme is for people with severe mobility problems. It allows Blue Badge holders to park close to where they need to go, in designated parking bays, either at the roadside or in car parks. However, it is up to individual local authorities to decide on eligibility, so being diagnosed with dementia does not automatically qualify you. You can find further information about the Blue Badge scheme on the Government's website (www.gov.uk).

Stopping driving

If you feel you aren't up to driving safely any more, it's not the end of the world. For a start, think how much money you'll be saving by not running a car! Taking taxis suddenly becomes not such an expensive treat. You could set up an account with a local taxi firm and make regular bookings for things like going to the supermarket or the hairdresser. Talk to friends and family who may be able to give you lifts. See if you can work out a routine that fits in with theirs. If you do decide to stop driving, don't forget to send back your driving licence to the DVLA.

Talk to friends and family who may be able to give you lifts. See if you can work out a routine that fits in with theirs.

Public transport

If you're of state pensionable age, in many local authority areas you'll be entitled to cheaper travel on public transport. If you intend to use it frequently, you can often buy cards that entitle you to reduced or free travel, such as a Railcard for use on trains.

If you're travelling on your own and feel you might need help getting on or off public transport, or might get lost or confused in stations or terminals, help is usually available. This assistance may have to be booked ahead.

Rail travel

Train companies will provide people to help you on to a train and to meet you at the other end. If making a connection, they will also meet and escort you to your connecting train. Assisted Travel needs to be booked in advance.

Contact National Rail Enquiries for further information. To contact your local rail company, you can visit the National Rail website (www.nationalrail.co.uk) and navigate to the 'Passengers with Disabilities' section. You should find a link to this section towards the bottom of the National Rail homepage - here you can find a list containing the phone numbers for each local rail company.

Dementia and walking

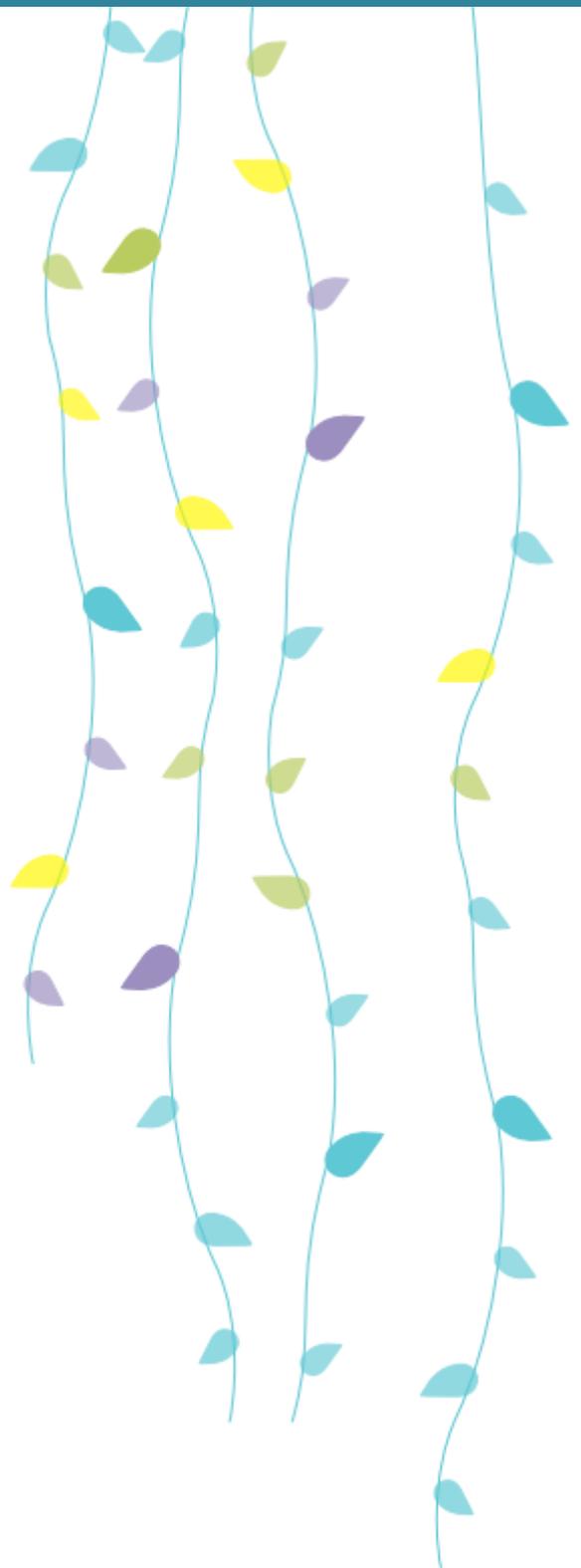
Walking is a wonderful, simple form of exercise; cheap, easy and can be done almost anywhere. It can actually help keep your mind in better shape. If you've always enjoyed walking, there is no reason to give it up just because you have dementia. Similarly, you might consider taking it up as a new hobby or interest. Many people with dementia find that, if they are no longer able to continue some of their old hobbies or find it hard to concentrate on other tasks, they become bored and restless. Walking is the perfect answer.

If you don't want to walk alone, or are concerned you might become lost, ask friends if they'd like to join you or join a local walking group.

The Ramblers has members of different abilities and arranges regular outings where you can choose the level of difficulty of walk (www.ramblers.org.uk).

You might have a neighbour who would welcome company when walking their dog or you might find information about local walking groups at your library.

If you enjoy walking alone let someone know where you are going and how long you are likely to be. Make sure that if you have a mobile phone that it is fully charged and switched on before setting off. Do make sure that you have some means of identification on you, preferably with a contact number for a relative, friend or a carer.



Dementia-friendly holidays

People with dementia can continue to enjoy holidays.

Holiday Planning

If you have family, friends or carers who will be going with you, discuss your needs and preferences with them. You and they will need to know that, wherever you choose to go, you will still be safe and happy if they are not with you.

If you are travelling on your own, decide whether you need to let anyone know in advance that you have dementia. In some instances they may be able to provide extra assistance. Take the time to plan an itinerary so that you can maximise the enjoyment of your holiday. Include lists of any medication in case of emergencies.

Advice before you book

- If you have mobility needs, ask for a room and bathroom that will suit your needs - you might prefer the ground floor or you might need an accessible shower
- If you need assistance at train stations or airports, book this in advance.
- If you know you will need help with certain things or have specific requirements - e.g. a quiet room, help with carrying trays in a self-service restaurant - mention this to your travel agent or tour operator. If they are aware of your needs, they can make sure help will be available or advise you if it will be tricky and suggest a different hotel or holiday company.
- Check that you will be able to get around and access the places you want to visit. Contact the local Tourist Information Office in the area you are visiting for more information on accessibility in their area.

Specialist holiday companies

There are some specialist holiday companies that cater for people - with or without their carers - who have dementia and other disabilities. A good source of advice and information on holidays if you might need some help and support is Tourism for All (www.tourismforall.org.uk). Another dementia-friendly holiday company is Dementia Adventure (www.dementiaadventure.co.uk).

If you are used to full-time care from family or a carer, you might also consider a respite holiday that would give both you and your carer a break. Revitalise (www.revitalise.org.uk) has centres across the UK where you can just relax or enjoy a themed holiday, such as horticulture, music, or arts and crafts.

Getting there

Coach travel

Some coach companies, such as National Express, offer assistance to travellers with special needs. There are also some specialist coach companies offering both UK and European travel that have fully accessible vehicles for people in wheelchairs.

Air travel

If you're intending to fly, and you're travelling alone, it's advisable to check with the airline whether you need to have medical clearance. However, airports and airlines should be able to provide assistance with movement around the airport, for example, reaching check-in and the departure lounge. Check with your airline. They will advise you of any specific requirements before you travel. If they can't help, then ask the airport.



Travel Insurance

If you are going away, even if it's a short break within the UK, it is advisable to take out travel insurance. This will cover you for things like travel delays, lost luggage, theft and missed connections. Most importantly, it can cover you for costs associated with having an accident or illness - for example, any medical treatment needed and the consequences of having to cut short your holiday and return home early. However, it is vital that you check you are eligible for this medical cover under the terms of your policy. Many policies will not cover you for claims arising from 'pre-existing medical conditions'. So, if you don't declare that you have dementia, your policy could be invalid.

Make sure you take out a policy that covers you for your dementia (and any other medical condition that you may have). The premiums may be higher, so it's worthwhile spending a bit of time shopping around.



Staying socially active

Spending time with family and friends is a great way to keep mentally active.

Relationships are important

There is no reason why you can't have the same relationships, friendships and social life as before your diagnosis. Keep doing the things you enjoy for as long as possible, even if you need help now and again. In fact – keeping socially active is good for the brain and good for creating a feeling of well-being.

It's important to keep in touch with family, friends and other social networks. As your dementia progresses, you will need more support so it's important that you keep up the contact with as many friends and family members as possible. They are often the people who are best placed to support you through your journey.

For couples, physical intimacy provides mutual comfort, support and pleasure even where one partner has dementia. You may find dementia affects your relationship with your partner. You may feel less desire or more, or have less confidence. Your partner may also be uncertain how to react. If you can, it is really important to talk about this with them. It may be that you are both 'wondering what the other is thinking', and talking about it can solve the problem. With some people, because they are facing a new problem together, it actually brings them closer together.

If you really find it too difficult to talk about or solve on your own, talk to someone that you feel comfortable with. This may be your GP, a close friend or family member.



Keeping in touch with friends

There's no reason why you can't still see your old friends and do the things you've always done together. In time, you may need a bit of help, but if you've kept up your friendships this will just become a natural part of the friendship.

Initially, on discovering you have dementia, some people may not know how to react, or you may be reluctant to tell them. They will probably be upset and not know what to say. Let your friends know that their friendship is just as important to you now as before. Tell them how your dementia is affecting you and let them know how they can support you.

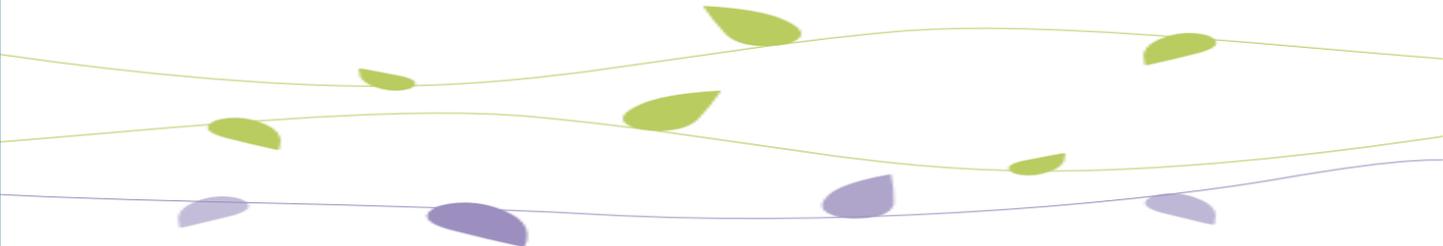
For younger people with dementia, others might find it hard to accept that you have a diagnosis of dementia. You may want to give people something to read, or refer them to a specific website that you've found useful. It can feel awkward but just explain that you are still the same person, you just have difficulty with certain things, such as your memory or recognising faces.

You may want to ask them to help you, or to continue to do things with you in the future when your dementia progresses. This could be going to the pub with you, shopping with you, visiting the cinema or just going for a walk. Often, keeping involved in activities will help you to keep friendships alive.

Making new friends

You can still get out and make new friends. If you take up a new interest or hobby you're bound to meet new people. Sharing an interest is a great way of making new friends. This may be through support groups for people with dementia and their carers. Check out the Carers Trust in your area (www.carers.org), your library and other specialist organisations, such as the Alzheimer's Society (www.alzheimers.org.uk). Wellbeing Cafés and social events for people with dementia are sometimes free and are a great way to meet other people in similar situations.

If you live in the Newcastle upon Tyne or Hexham areas, find out about attending our specialist Day Centres for people with dementia. You can do this by visiting the Our Services page of the Dementia Care website and clicking on the Day Centres link (www.dementiacare.org.uk).



Staying independent

Maintaining independence is important for us all.

Doing things for yourself

Maintaining your independence will come high on your list of priorities. But it's also natural for the people who care about you to want to protect you from harm. They may well want to do things for you that you feel you can do independently. This can be frustrating. Talk to them and tell them how you are feeling.

Memory issues

As your dementia progresses, you may find that your memory is not what it was. This will mean that daily tasks, making decisions and many other things that we take for granted will become more of a challenge. At this moment in time you are still independent and you can still do many daily living tasks for yourself. However, your memory is likely to cause you problems in the future. There are many simple steps that you can put into place now that will support you when the time comes that they are needed.

Tips and tricks that may help:

- Use a large wipe-clean notice board to write down things you need to remember, such as shopping, dental appointments.
- Keep a list of phone numbers of friends and relatives by the phone. There are different types of phones available, such as picture phones that automatically dial the person when you touch their picture. Others have easydial numbers and you can put pictures of your main contacts next to the corresponding buttons. Try the following websites for technology that may be able to help you: www.atdementia.org.uk or www.unforgettable.org
- Buy a clock with a large face, and the day and date. You can find these on the above websites.
- Write things down in your diary or ask friends to do so. This could include appointments, visits to friends, shopping. Then check your diary each day at breakfast to remind yourself what you're doing that day. It will also remind you of what you have been doing, and who you have seen.
- Put labels on the doors in your house, or a simple photograph e.g. a picture of a toilet for the bathroom.
- Carry your name, address and phone number (and that of a friend) with you.
- Place objects you use a lot, such as the telephone or items for making your favourite hot drink, somewhere that you can easily see them.

Staying independent – top tips

We have been supporting people with dementia and their families for over 20 years. Below are some things that people tell us have helped them:

Reminders

- Buy a clock that also tells you the day and the date.
- Buy a calendar with plenty of space for writing notes and appointments.
- Have a visitors book and ask visitors to write their name and contact details and a brief description of what you talked about.
- Make a to-do list, or use a reminder board, and read it every morning.

Eating

- Eat regularly.
- Make sure you always have snacks in the house that you don't have to cook - fruit, ready-prepared meals, cereal bars, cold meats and cheese for sandwiches. That way if you feel tired there's still something to eat.

Routines

- Try to keep a routine.
- Know your good times of day. Make appointments and save difficult tasks for your good times.
- Keep important things, such as keys, glasses, money, in the same place, so you know where to find them.

Support networks

- Let family and friends know how they can support you.
- Keep in touch with other people in the same situation as you; they will know what you are going through.

Getting out and about

- Go out for a walk each day, even just 'round the block'.
- If you have a garden, try to get out and spend time there. It will help you relax.
- Carry your name, address and phone number (and that of a friend or relative) with you when you go out. Write the information on a credit-card-sized card and also mention that you have dementia.

Getting things done

- Do things in bite-size chunks; that way you'll still get things done, even if it's slower, and you'll have a sense of achievement.
- Don't rush, there's plenty of time.

Avoid stressful tasks

- Avoid things such as shopping that are stressful for you. Get friends or neighbours to help, or use internet shopping.

Keeping in touch

- Keep a typed list of important phone numbers, and those of relatives and friends, by the telephone.
- Add photos next to the numbers so you can quickly recognise the person.

Changes to consider

Think about changing things in your home to make life easier for you, your family and friends in the future.

Changes you can make to your home

As your dementia progresses, you may find that you need some support, either simple aids and equipment, such as grab rails and shower seats, or more sophisticated 'assistive technology' such as telecare personal alarms and motion sensor lighting.

Making a few simple changes to your home will mean that you can stay independent for as long as possible. The key is for you to be involved in choices about fixtures, fittings and furniture, to enable you to get used to things changing around you.

Professional advisors, such as occupational therapists and physiotherapists, will also have lots of useful advice. This way you can continue to do the things you enjoy doing.

Some simple examples

Think about whether you need to de-clutter.

Using night-lights to help you find your way around if you need to go to the toilet in the night.

Putting important things, such as keys, glasses, money, in the same place, such as a bowl or basket on the kitchen table, so that you can find them easily.

Putting tea, coffee and other day-to-day essentials in clear view on work surfaces.

Using see-through storage jars in the kitchen or put items in bowls.

Using touch-sensitive lamps - table lamps and bedside lamps that switch on or off when you touch their base.

Buying a Calendar clock - these automatically show the day and date as well as the time.

We have developed a comprehensive online guide to creating a dementia-friendly house. Please check our website (www.dementiacare.org) to find out how to access it.

Assistive Technology

There are lots of technology products now available to help people with dementia and their carers. These can be products used by the person with dementia themselves or installed in their home to keep them safe.

Technology for you

If you are familiar with using computers and mobile phones, they can be a great help with supporting you to stay independent. Computers can be used to write life stories, for reminiscence and to access the internet to pursue hobbies. Apps like Facebook are a great way to stay in touch and see what family and friends are up to. It can also remind you of birthdays and anniversaries and events that happened in the past.

Using a mobile phone means that you can still feel safe if you go out, as you can call someone if necessary. A smartphone or SatNav can also help you to work out where you are if you get lost.



You can attach a unit to a normal telephone that can be fitted with photographs of the person you want to call. Simply touch the photograph and that person's number is automatically dialled.

Technology to keep you safe

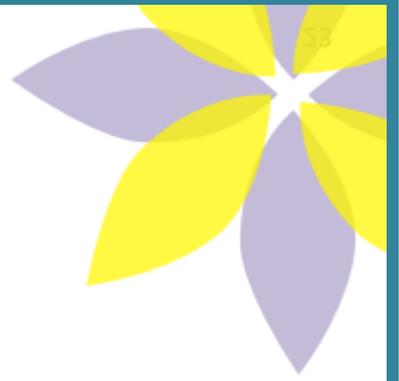
Many people have burglar and fire alarms installed to keep their belongings safe, so why not do the same for the people? Your local council can advise on sensors that you can install to warn if you leave a gas hob on or flood the bathroom.

More sophisticated alarms can detect if you have a fall and automatically call for help. They are linked to external monitoring staff who are alerted that you may be in difficulty. They will summon help – either relatives or neighbours who have keys, or the emergency services.

To make things easier at night, you could install automatic lighting - through the use of infra-red beams, lights will automatically come on or switch off as you enter or leave different rooms or areas of the house. This is not only safer, it could save you electricity, as you won't forget to turn lights off at night.

More information

There are new products launched all the time. For more information on what's available, visit www.atdementia.org.uk or www.unforgettable.org



Life stories

Everybody's life is filled with unique and individual stories. These stories are not only a wonderful treasure-trove of memories, but they also tell other people more about you. Putting together a 'life story book' while your memory still allows, means that these stories from your past won't be forgotten. It also means that people who may be looking after you in the future will know more about you and can provide the care and support that you would like.

- Your story can be written or recorded.
- It can also include photographs and mementos, such as postcards and tickets. Whichever way you choose to do it, involve your family and have some fun sharing your story.
- It should cover your background, family, career, significant people and events, your likes and dislikes and so on.

Involve others

Creating your life story is often a good thing to do with your family. You may find they can help and it's often popular with teenage grandchildren. Remember it is okay to tell people that you have difficulty remembering things. Once people know, you'll be surprised how genuinely helpful they can become.

Visit our website to read examples of life stories and get a downloadable Word template which you can use to create your own life story.

Care and support

At some stage you will probably need to have additional care support.



If I need care, who will give it?

You may have friends or family that will provide care for you, and they can read more about what this might involve in our other booklets, **Being a Carer** and **Caring for Someone with Dementia**. However, you may wish to commission a professional company or charity to provide some or all of your care.

Getting professional support

There is a wide range of professional support available, specifically trained to help people with dementia. These range from consultants and psychiatric nurses to occupational therapists and social workers.

You can find out more about this in the **Professional Support** section of our **Being a Carer** booklet.

You may be eligible for financial support from Social Services as your dementia progresses and at a later stage from the NHS.

If you live in the Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside or Northumberland area, we can provide care for you. You can find out more about the services that we offer by visiting the Our Services section of our website (www.dementiacare.org.uk).

Personal care

Having dementia will at some stage make day-to-day tasks difficult. This includes very personal activities, such as getting washed, dressed and managing going to the toilet. Make it clear to people that are caring for you that you will need help with these aspects of your life. You may find it embarrassing but, remember that professional carers are trained to do it with dignity and respect.

If you choose to have support in your home the provider will need to gather information and complete an assessment with you. The information you provide will help them to create an agreed plan of support to meet your needs.

Looking to the future

Dementia is a progressive condition. It is also a very individual one. How it develops and how slowly or quickly the changes occur will vary from person to person. You may find you can cope well and live independently, with some support, for a long time. Because it is progressive, however, there will come a time when you are less able to cope. It's important that you can find out about what happens with dementia in its later stages and what your future may be like.

It's important to talk to family and friends. You should also talk to your GP. The Alzheimer's Society National Dementia Helpline (0300 222 1122) is a free and confidential helpline where you can get information, support, guidance and referrals to other appropriate organisations.



Support organisations

For more information or advice, please call Dementia Care on 0191 217 1323 and ask to speak to one of our Dementia Guides. They offer free face-to-face support for people with dementia and their families in Newcastle upon Tyne, Hexham and the surrounding areas.

A variety of support groups will exist in your local area. To find out who they are and how to contact them, it may also be useful to contact some of the national organisations listed here:

Age UK
www.ageuk.org.uk
or call 0800 169 2081

Alzheimer's Society
www.alzheimers.org.uk
or call 0845 300 0336

The Lewy Body Society
www.lewybody.org
or call 0131 473 2385

Carers UK
www.carersuk.org
or call 0808 808 7777

The Princess Royal Trust
www.carers.org
or call 0844 800 4361

Concerns regarding financial or other abuse of a vulnerable person

If you have any concerns regarding financial or other abuse of a vulnerable person, you should contact the Office of the Public Guardian:

PO Box 16185
Birmingham
B2 2WH
Tel: 0300 456 0300 or
Email: customerservices@publicguardian.gsi.gov.uk

Opening hours:
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday - 9 am to 5 pm
Wednesday - 10 am to 5 pm

