

About you... looking after yourself

If you have been diagnosed with dementia, this help sheet may be useful. It suggests ways to look after yourself and some people who can assist you to do this.

Being diagnosed with dementia might have come as a shock to you, as well as your family and friends. However, there is much that you can do to ensure that you remain independent for as possible and continue to enjoy life.

Your health

It is always important to maintain good health.

Some suggestions

- In consultation with your doctor, exercise regularly and stay active. This might include walking, gardening or continuing with other activities you enjoy, even though you may need to modify them
- Eat a balanced diet
- Rest when you are tired
- Incorporate regular relaxation into your day
- Limit your intake of alcohol. For some people alcohol can make memory problems worse
- Ensure you are taking medication as prescribed – a pillbox (dosette) can help organise your medication. The chemist can sort tablets into the dosette on a regular basis
- Have a regular general health check up

Your feelings

Experiencing the changes caused by dementia may bring about a range of different emotions. Having such feelings is very common and it may help to share them. Talk to someone you are comfortable with and trust. You might also like to join a support group and meet others who have dementia to share experiences and ideas for dealing with the condition.

Managing with memory loss

While you may clearly remember events from long ago, recent events may be harder to recall. You may have difficulty keeping track of time, people and places. There will be days when your memory is better than others. Though unsettling, this type of fluctuation is normal.

Some suggestions

- Keep a diary or note book of important things to remember and try to have it with you all the time. It may contain:
 - Appointments or a list of things to do
 - Important phone numbers, including your own and ones that may be needed in an emergency
 - Names and photos of people you see regularly. Label photos with names and their connection to you such as son, friend, etc.
 - Your address and a map showing where your home is
 - A record of your daily activities to look back on
 - Any thoughts or ideas you want to hold on to
- Put up a whiteboard or pin board in a prominent place such as the kitchen and use it to write important things to remember for the day or week
- Telephone numbers written in large print and put up by the telephone can be helpful. Include emergency numbers, as well as a description of where you live
- Label cupboards and drawers with words or pictures that describe the contents, for example dishes, knives and forks

- Keep a special place for important items such as glasses, wallet and medications
- Marking off days on the calendar is a way of keeping track of the time
- Ask family and friends to ring just before coming to visit as an extra reminder

Getting through the day

You may find it harder to do the things you once did easily. For example, preparing meals or managing your money and balancing your cheque book may become more difficult, or take more time than it used to.

Some suggestions

- Give yourself more time; don't let others hurry you
- If something is too difficult, try taking a break for a while
- Try breaking a task down into smaller steps and take one at a time
- Arrange for others to help you with difficult tasks, or perhaps with parts of tasks

Talking to others

It is important to keep up your social contacts. Finding the right words to express your thoughts and understanding what people are saying can be difficult at times.

Some suggestions

- Take your time
- Let people know you have a condition that affects your memory, your ability to think and/or communicate
- If you did not understand what someone says, ask them to repeat it
- It IS okay to ask over and over again
- If too many people or too much noise bothers you, find a quiet place
- If you lose a thought, let it go – it is okay if you forget it – it may come back later

Finding your way

There may be days when things that are usually familiar to you become unfamiliar.

Some suggestions

- If you enjoy taking a walk, try to take the same route each time
- Don't be afraid to ask for help
- Explain to people that you have a condition that affects your memory and that you need some assistance
- Try to carry identification at all times, including your name, address, phone number and emergency contact. This can be carried in a bag or pocket, or engraved on a bracelet. Keep this information up to date
- Consider getting a bracelet or necklace which is linked to a 24-hour emergency assistance service with all your details registered

Based on:

I'm told I have dementia, Alzheimer's Society, UK
Just for you, Alzheimer's Society of Canada

Further Information

Dementia Australia offers support, information, education and counselling. Contact the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**, or visit our website at dementia.org.au



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