

# Dementia Care



## *Educating Yourself*

### **What is Dementia?**

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Dementia is a disorder that damages the brain cells. The affects of the disorder occur in stages over a period of years, beginning with short-term memory loss, eventually leading to an inability to properly care for one's self. It can cause hallucinations, violent behavior, and mood swings. To care for a dementia patient requires compassion and understanding, but above all, it requires patience.

### **Learning to work with Dementia**

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Educating yourself is vital if you are caring for a loved one at home. The more you know about dementia, its stages, and what to expect, the better equipped you will be to handle situations as they arise. Each dementia patient progresses through the disease differently and experiences different symptoms. If you work in a nursing facility, you may be required to take periodic classes referred to as in-services, which serve to keep you updated on the latest forms of treatment and techniques used in caring for dementia patients.

## Common warning signs of Dementia

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1. Asking the same question over and over again.
2. Repeating the same story, word for word, again and again.
3. Forgetting how to carry out activities that used to be done regularly and with ease (such as cooking and playing cards).
4. Losing the ability to carry out simple operations such as paying the bills.
5. Getting lost in familiar surroundings, or misplacing household objects.
6. Neglecting personal care (as bathing) or wearing the same clothes over and over again.
7. Relying on someone else to answer questions or to make decisions that used to be handled alone.

## 3 Main stages of Dementia

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### Mild or Early- Stage:

Memory loss and other cognitive impairments are minor but become more and more noticeable. The person can however compensate for them and continue to function independently.



### Moderate or Mid-Stage:

Changes become more marked and disabling. Mental abilities decline, personality changes and physical problems develop. The person becomes more and more dependent on caregivers for daily activities.



### Severe or Late-Stage:

Complete deterioration of the personality. Physical problems are dominant with loss of control over bodily functions. The person is totally dependent on others for even the most basic activities.

## Common Symptoms of Dementia

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Memory loss



Language problems



Misplacing objects



Difficulty with abstract thinking



Mood swings or personality changes



Loss of initiative/ apathy



General Confusion and disorientation



Difficulty performing familiar activity

# *What's Important*

## **Keeping your patience**

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Caring for dementia patients requires a considerable amount of understanding and patience. They are prone to mood swings, violent behavior, and hallucinations. When you encounter these moments during care, you need to maintain your patience, continuing to speak to them in a calm, soothing voice. This may help divert their attention from the cause of their agitation and

can diffuse the situation. In the event that their behavior does not subside, it is better to walk away from the situation until they are calm, as long as they are safe. You should never disagree with what they are saying or attempt to convince them that they are wrong and you are right; this will only escalate their agitation.

## **Ensuring their safety**

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As the disease progresses, dementia patients develop a tendency to wander. To keep them safe, you will need to keep them in an enclosed area, such as a fenced yard, or install an alarm system. If they are at home, the alarm system can be something simple such as chimes tied to a door, alerting you when they attempt to leave. If they are in a nursing facility, the alarm system is a bit more complex. They will have a band on their wrist or ankle with a sensor in it. Each door and elevator is equipped with a device that automatically locks and sets off a sound similar to a fire alarm whenever they attempt to leave.



# Tips for Dementia Care

## Clarify the time

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One problem dementia patients may have is confusing night and day, resulting in backward sleeping patterns. One way to combat this problem is to keep the blinds open during the day, enabling them to see the light, and closing them at night so they know it's time to sleep. You may also want to place large numbered, digital clocks throughout the house, or in their room, so they can see the time clearly.

## Engage them in activities

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Whether you play cards with your loved one or look through old photo albums, doing something to occupy their mind will help keep them busy and entertained. This may also help prevent agitated behavior from taking place and help their memory stay intact a bit longer. Remember, the brain is a muscle that needs exercise. If it's not used, it will die.



**Contact us to learn more**

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