

Living well with dementia in Barnet



Everyone who lives with dementia, lives a very different and unique experience. How an individual and the community around them understands and responds to dementia will impact how well someone lives with dementia.

What is dementia?

Dementia is not a specific disease, but a term that covers many different types of disorders that have many different causes. Dementia is progressive and is caused when the brain is damaged by diseases such as Alzheimer's or strokes.

Can dementia be prevented?

There is evidence that a healthy lifestyle reduces the risk of dementia. Regular physical exercise, eating well and maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, and drinking alcohol in moderation are all linked to reducing the risk of dementia. It is important to remember that prevention for dementia starts early in midlife.

Caring for **people**, our **places** and the **planet**



Working to become
**Dementia
Friendly**
2023



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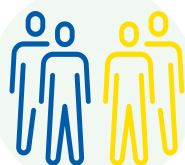
Early signs and symptoms of dementia

It's normal for a person's memory to be affected by stress, tiredness, certain illnesses and medicines. But if you're becoming increasingly forgetful and it is impacting your day to day, particularly if you're over the age of 65, it's a good idea to talk to a GP about the early signs of dementia.

Symptoms of dementia may include problems with memory loss, mental sharpness, using words correctly, or having trouble speaking or understanding. Mood swings, difficulty with movement and carrying out daily activities can also be symptoms.

A dementia diagnosis

A study by the Alzheimer's Society has shown that more than half of people wait for up to a year before getting help for dementia symptoms, because they feel afraid. But an accurate and early diagnosis can help people with dementia get treatment and support they need to continue living active and fulfilled lives.



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Steps to a diagnosis:



1. **Recognise that things are not how they were and see your GP if you're worried about your memory. If you're worried about someone else's memory, encourage them to see their GP and perhaps suggest to go with them.**



2. **Your GP will ask a few questions about your symptoms and health history. To help rule out other causes of memory loss, they may refer you for scans, blood tests, and a physical examination.**



3. **If a problem is identified, your GP will refer you to a specialist for a full assessment, diagnosis and treatment tailored to you.**
4. **After you've had the necessary tests (or sometimes before the tests), your GP should ask if you want to know your diagnosis. They should explain what having dementia might mean for you and give you time to talk about the condition and ask questions.**



5. **After you've been diagnosed with dementia, your GP should arrange to see you from time to time, to check how you're managing.**

Living well with dementia

Dementia can affect all aspects of a person's life, as well as those around them. If you have been diagnosed with dementia, it's important to remember that:

- you're still you, even though you have problems with memory, concentration and planning
- everyone experiences dementia differently
- focusing on the things you can still do and enjoy will help you to stay positive

With the right help and support when you need it, many people can, and do, live well with dementia for many years.

The importance of good communication

Dementia is a progressive illness and it will gradually affect the way a person communicates. Their ability to present rational ideas and to reason clearly will change.

When talking to someone with dementia it is important to use respectful language. A person is not suffering with dementia, but they are living with dementia.

Someone living with dementia may be experiencing a different reality to others.

- Acknowledge their feelings and be patient.
- Be clear and gentle.
- Offer simple choices, eg. change rooms, turn on the TV, turn off the TV.
- Get to know the person's likes and preferences.
- Be involved with their activities. This will support their wellbeing and raise self-esteem. Include them in activities whenever possible and encourage them to help with daily tasks.
- Try to focus on what the person can do, and not what they are no longer able to do.
- Look out for behavioural clues to understand what they might be feeling.
- Try not to argue. Remind yourself that you may both be coming from different states of mind. It might be useful at times to agree and apologise.
- Be flexible, as what works one day may not work the next.

Caring for someone with dementia is a journey and it's ok to make mistakes. You might not always get things right the first time.





Services and support for people living with dementia

Age UK Barnet offer a Dementia Adviser Service to provide support for the whole family, as well as activities including the Dementia Café, singing groups, befriending and day clubs for all people living with dementia who are over 55.

Visit www.age-uk/barnet/our-services or call **020 8203 5040**.

Social Care Direct provide information, advice and support for people living with dementia and their carers.

Visit www.barnet.gov.uk/adult-social-care email socialcaredirect@barnet.gov.uk or call **020 8359 5000**.

Services and support for people caring for someone living with dementia

Barnet Carers offer support for carers of people living with dementia, including practical advice and mental health and wellbeing support.

Visit www.barnetcarers.org

Age UK Barnet and Barnet Carers jointly offer a support group for those caring for someone living with dementia.

Contact adultcarers@barnetcarers.org or **020 3995 1909** to find out more.

Be part of Barnet's Dementia Friendly movement

Take a free **Understanding Dementia** training course, delivered by **Dementia Club UK** (bit.ly/ud-courses), or join the **Dementia Friendly Partnership**. For anyone who wants to make a difference. Find out more at www.barnet.gov.uk/dementiasupport



For more information and support, visit: www.barnet.gov.uk/dementiasupport
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