

# Five things you should know about dementia

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This year we are keen for people to find out five key facts about dementia, which are outlined on this page and in our booklet.



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## Dementia is not a natural part of ageing

It is true that dementia is more common among over-65s, and some of us do become more forgetful as we get older, or during times of stress or illness.

But [dementia](#) is a different sort of forgetfulness. Your memory loss will be more noticeable, and may be accompanied by mood changes and confusion. It's important to ask your doctor to check out any [unusual symptoms](#) as they may be able to treat them with appropriate medication.

## Dementia is caused by diseases of the brain

2

Dementia is the name for a collection of symptoms that include memory loss, mood changes and problems with communication and reasoning. These symptoms are brought about by a number of diseases that cause changes in the brain. The most common of these is [Alzheimer's disease](#). Alzheimer's changes the chemistry and structure of the brain causing the brain cells to die off. Other types of dementia include [vascular dementia](#) and [Pick's disease](#).

## It's not just about losing your memory

3

People often think of dementia as a form of [memory loss](#). And usually it does start by affecting people's short-term memory. But it's more than that: it can also affect the way people think, speak and do things. Dementia makes it harder to do things because it makes it difficult to plan and learn new [activities](#), and interferes with structured tasks like writing. It can also make it harder to communicate. There is much that can be done to help. Every year we understand more about dementia, and develop new strategies that can help to boost someone's confidence and maintain their [independence](#) for as long as possible.

## It's possible to live well with dementia

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Most of us have an image in our mind of what [life with dementia looks like](#). That image is often very bleak. So it can be very surprising to learn that many people with dementia continue to drive, socialise and hold down satisfying jobs. Even as [dementia progresses](#), many people lead active, healthy lives, continue their hobbies, and enjoy loving friendships and relationships. Of course dementia does make it harder to do certain things. But with the right support and know-how, it is possible for someone with dementia to get the very best out of life.

## There's more to a person than the dementia

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A talented gospel singer, a loving family man, a keen walker and self confessed Radio 4 addict... Clarice, Poopal and Caroline are living proof that people with dementia can live rich, varied lives. You can find out more about them on these pages.

If you have any concerns or are [worried about your memory](#), please contact our [helpline](#).

Dementia Awareness Week 2012 is sponsored by Saga Homecare. Together Alzheimer's Society and Saga Homecare hope to maximise awareness and understanding of dementia across the UK.

Alzheimer's Society National Dementia Helpline

England, Wales and Northern Ireland: 0300 222 11 22

9.00am-5.00pm Monday-Friday

10.00am-4.00pm Saturday-Sunday

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