

# What are drug treatments for dementia?

There is no cure for dementia yet. Some symptoms can be treated with drugs. Looking after the person's health will help them to live well with dementia.

## How do drugs help?

There are drugs that can help with some symptoms, or stop them getting worse for a while. They don't work for all types of dementia. They don't work for everyone. Some people may need to try different drugs to find one that works for them.

## Which drugs help with dementia?

Four drugs treat Alzheimer's disease. These are donepezil, rivastigmine, galantamine and memantine. These drugs may reduce the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease or stop them getting worse for a while. People with dementia with Lewy bodies, Parkinson's disease dementia or mixed dementia may also be given these drugs.

A person with frontotemporal dementia (FTD) won't be given these drugs. They may be given antidepressant drugs. A person with vascular dementia will usually be given drugs to treat other problems they have, such as high blood pressure or heart problems.

The GP will give the drugs to a person who needs them. They will check how the drugs are working every year at an annual review. For more information see factsheet 425, **How the GP can support a person with dementia.**

## Why take drugs to help with dementia?

Donepezil, rivastigmine, galantamine and memantine may help with the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and DLB for a while. They may make anxiety, memory and concentration better. The person might feel more motivated. Together these can help with everyday life.

Drugs given to a person with vascular dementia or FTD will help them to look after their health and live well with dementia.

## Do these drugs have side effects?

Talk to the GP about side effects. They affect only around one person in 10, on average. If one of the drugs causes side effects, the doctor might ask the person to try another.



Factsheet 407, **Drug treatments for Alzheimer's disease** has more information. To read it, go to [alzheimers.org.uk/drug-treatments](https://alzheimers.org.uk/drug-treatments). For more information about our helpsheets, go to [alzheimers.org.uk/helpsheets](https://alzheimers.org.uk/helpsheets)



Alzheimer's Society is here for you. If you are worried about dementia, call us on **0333 150 3456**. We can arrange to speak with you in any language.



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