

Worried about your memory?

Find out more
about memory
problems and
what you can
do next

alzheimers.org.uk



Worried about memory problems?

Everybody forgets things from time to time. But if you or other people are noticing that problems with your memory are getting worse, or this is affecting everyday life, it could be a sign of dementia.

How can I tell if my memory problems are a sign of something serious?

Forgetting why you went upstairs. Failing to put a name to the face of a celebrity. And the feeling that a word is 'on the tip of your tongue'. We've all done it – and most of the time small memory slips aren't serious. Many people find that their memory becomes less reliable as they get older.

However, if your memory is getting noticeably worse, or affecting everyday life, you should seek help as it may be a sign of a medical condition. There are many causes of memory loss, including depression, infections and vitamin and thyroid deficiencies.

Memory loss can also be an early sign of dementia. This is especially true if you:

- struggle to remember recent events, although you can easily recall things from the past
- find it hard to follow conversations or programmes on TV
- forget the names of close friends or everyday objects
- struggle to recall things you have heard, seen or read recently
- regularly lose the thread of what you are saying
- find yourself putting objects in unusual places – such as your keys in the fridge
- feel confused, even in a familiar place, or get lost on familiar journeys
- find that people start to notice or comment on your memory loss.

What should I do next?

If you're worried about your memory, visit your GP or talk to us. It is important to find out the reason for the problems as there may be treatment or support available that can help.

Your GP will talk to you (and anyone with you) about your concerns and arrange for further investigation if necessary.

You may be referred to a local memory clinic or hospital specialist where further assessments will take place so you can get a diagnosis.

If you're concerned about the memory of someone close to you, encourage them to visit their GP. You could start the conversation by gently asking if they've been feeling any different from usual or are struggling with anything. Support them to make the appointment with their GP and ask if they'd like you to go with them.





What is dementia?

Five facts about the condition

- 1** The word ‘dementia’ describes a set of symptoms that may include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language, and often changes in mood, perception or behaviour.
- 2** Dementia is caused when the brain is damaged by diseases such as Alzheimer’s disease or a series of strokes. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common cause of dementia.
- 3** Dementia is more common in people over 65, but it can affect younger people too.
- 4** There are factors that increase your risk of getting dementia but it is not usually possible to say for sure why a particular person has developed dementia.
- 5** Most instances of dementia are not inherited but there are exceptions. These exceptions tend to be rarer forms of dementia or cases where someone develops the condition very young – in their 50s or earlier.

What if it is dementia?

Everyone's experience of a diagnosis of dementia is different. On the next page you can read about one person's experience. Sadness, fear and a sense of loss or disbelief are all common reactions. It may sound strange but some people also feel relief, from having an explanation for the changes they have been experiencing. Once you have a diagnosis, you can deal with it and do something about it.

What happens next?

There is no known cure for dementia, but your doctor may prescribe drugs that can lessen symptoms for a while. Treatment for dementia includes both drug and non-drug approaches, looking after other medical conditions and making changes to your lifestyle. With a combination of these, it is possible to live well with dementia for many years.

The non-drug treatments that are available, and how to be referred for them, can vary around the country. Your GP or memory service should give you details of these, or you can contact Alzheimer's Society.

It's important to know that you aren't alone – about 850,000 people in the UK have dementia. It's possible to live well with dementia and there is support available for you and your family.



'I'd always been renowned for having a brilliant memory – I never did forget. But then it started to let me down badly. I couldn't put names to faces I recognised, people I'd known for years. I'd forget the simplest of words at work. The worst episode was coming out of my office and not knowing where I was or who all the voices around me belonged to.

The diagnosis was bizarrely, a relief. It finally put an end to all the uncertainty. When you're experiencing strange symptoms, your mind is working overtime as to the cause. Don't get me wrong – it was a bummer of a diagnosis – but it was at least an explanation and I could move on from there.

I want to show that a diagnosis doesn't have to spell the end but rather the beginning of a different life. Many people lose self-worth but they have so much to offer.

Living as well as you can with dementia is all about adapting. Every time dementia throws up a new problem, there's always a way of coping rather than giving in. I concentrate on enjoying today, not dwelling on things I don't have control over. I focus on the here and now – I have control over that.'

Wendy's story



‘Living as well as
you can with dementia
is all about adapting.’

If you are concerned about memory problems, or if you or someone close to you is diagnosed with dementia, we're here to provide expert support, help and advice.

You can call our National Dementia Helpline on **0300 222 1122** or visit **[alzheimers.org.uk/memoryworry](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/memoryworry)**

Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading dementia charity. We provide information and support, improve care, fund research, and create lasting change for people affected by dementia.

How
Alzheimer's
Society
can help

Talk to us

If you're worried about your memory, or someone else's, then contact your GP or talk to us. Whatever your questions or concerns, we can help.

Call our National Dementia Helpline on **0300 222 1122**

Helpline opening hours:

Monday to Wednesday 9am – 8pm

Thursday and Friday 9am – 5pm

Saturday and Sunday 10am – 4pm

Visit alzheimers.org.uk/memoryworry to get the facts about memory problems and dementia.

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