

The United Reformed Church

Signs of dementia and memory loss



**GOOD
PRACTICE 6
S4**

The material in this resource comes from www.alzheimers.org.uk

Dementia

Each person experiences dementia in their own individual way. Different types of dementia also tend to affect people differently, especially in the early stages.

However, there are some common early signs and symptoms of dementia. These include:

- memory loss – for example, problems recalling things that happened recently
- difficulty concentrating, planning or organising – for example, struggling to make decisions, solve problems or follow a series of steps (such as cooking a meal)
- problems with language and communication – for example, difficulties following a conversation or finding the right word for something
- misunderstanding what is being seen – for example, problems judging distances (such as on stairs) or perceiving the edges of objects, and misinterpreting patterns or reflections
- being confused about time or place – for example, losing track of the time or date, or becoming confused about where they are
- mood changes or difficulty controlling emotions – for example, becoming unusually anxious, irritable, sad or frightened, losing interest in things and personality changes.

Symptoms as dementia progresses

As a person's dementia progresses they are likely to experience additional symptoms:

- they may sometimes behave in ways that are physically or verbally aggressive
- walking about – walking repeatedly around at home or leaving the house during the day or night
- lack of insight – when a person with dementia is unable to recognise changes in their behaviour and emotions
- sleep problems – as well as disruption to their body clock, a person with dementia may sleep more in the day and have difficulty sleeping at night
- delusions – strongly believing something that is false.

Memory loss

Memory can be affected in different ways. These include:

- not being able to create new memories – this means that recent events are not 'recorded' in the person's memory and so cannot be recalled later. For example, the person may forget a conversation they have just had
- taking longer to retrieve information – this means that, even though the person is still able to recall things, this takes them much longer or they might need a prompt. For example, they might need more time to find the name for an object
- not being able to retrieve information – for example, they may get lost in familiar surroundings or on journeys they have taken many times.

Memory loss affects everyone differently but many people with dementia experience some of the following:

- forgetting recent conversations or events (sometimes referred to as short-term memory loss)
- struggling to find the right word in a conversation
- forgetting names of people and objects
- losing or misplacing items (such as keys or glasses)
- getting lost in familiar surroundings or on familiar journeys
- forgetting how to carry out familiar tasks (such as making a cup of tea)
- forgetting appointments or anniversaries
- not being able to keep track of medication, and whether or when it has been taken
- struggling to recognise faces of people they know well.

These changes may be more visible to family and friends than to the person themselves.

My checklist for possible dementia symptoms



Together we are help & hope for everyone living with dementia

This checklist will help you have a conversation with a doctor or other health professional. Use it to note any difficulties you've had.

It is not intended to diagnose dementia or any other health condition. Everyone experiences dementia in their own way. This checklist includes common signs of dementia. But there can be other reasons for any changes you've noticed.

Talk to your doctor about any concerns that you've indicated on the checklist.



Memory and mental ability problems

Tick if affected by Tick if impacting daily life How long it's been happening

Memory loss – difficulty learning new information or forgetting recent events or people's names			
Struggling to find the right word			
Difficulty judging distances or mistaking reflections or patterns for other objects			
Struggling to make decisions, or making careless or risky decisions			
Losing track of time and dates			
Asking the same question over again, or repeating phrases			
Putting objects in unusual places			



Problems with daily living activities

Struggling with tasks like paying bills, planning ahead, shopping			
Difficulty getting enough sleep			
Getting lost in familiar places			



Mood and behaviour problems

Tick if affected by

Tick if impacting daily life

How long it's been happening

Becoming easily upset, irritable, or aggressive			
Symptoms of depression, like feeling sad or hopeless			
Symptoms of anxiety, like feeling very worried or uneasy			
Withdrawal or losing interest in things I previously enjoyed			
Acting inappropriately or out of character			
Feeling restless and walking about			



Notes on other symptoms or concerns



Hearing problems

Date of last hearing test: _____



Sight problems

Date of last sight test: _____

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 Code 78DD checklist

Endorsed by the Royal College of General Practitioners

