

What is dementia?

Dementia describes a collection of symptoms that are caused by disorders affecting the brain. It is not one specific disease. Dementia affects thinking, behaviour and the ability to perform everyday tasks and in time will interfere with the person's normal, social and working life.

Everyone with dementia is unique. There are many different types of dementia and symptoms can present differently in different people.

Dementia in Australia

Every 3 seconds someone in the world develops dementia. There are currently more than 436,000* people in Australia who have dementia and many of these people are living and actively participating in their community. There are some simple steps you can take to make your local community, business or organisation more dementia-friendly.

To keep updated on the work Dementia Australia is doing on dementia-friendly communities, please visit dementiafriendly.org.au

For further information and enquiries please contact:

National Dementia Helpline
1800 100 500



For language assistance call **131 450**

dementia.org.au

For further information about communication, see the Dementia Australia **Caring for someone with dementia** help sheets at dementia.org.au/resources/help-sheets



Let's talk



Good communication tips for talking with people with dementia

This resource has been developed by the Dementia Australia Advisory Committee

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The following are principles of communication that people living with dementia have told us would make a difference to their lives

Talk with me

Please talk with me, not my carer, family member or friend. Don't prejudge my level of understanding.

Please speak clearly

Make eye contact and speak clearly. Use short sentences, with one idea at a time. Avoid jargon, as I might misunderstand.

Please keep questions simple

Make sure I am listening and use simple questions and/or repetition, offered with sensitivity. It's easier for me to answer direct questions, rather than open-ended questions, such as saying 'Wasn't it lovely when we went out to the park yesterday?' not just 'Wasn't it lovely yesterday?'.

Treat me with dignity and respect

I am still a person, so don't patronise me. Respect and empathy are important to everyone. If I act differently it may be because I am having difficulty communicating or because of my disease.

Don't question my diagnosis

The symptoms of dementia are not always obvious. Listen to me and don't minimise my feelings.

Distractions cause disruptions

Less noise and fewer distractions, such as bright lights, will help me to focus.

Be patient and understanding

Sometimes it takes a little longer for me to process information and find the right answer. Don't rush me. Give me more time to respond and compose my questions.

Break it down

Providing information in smaller chunks will really help me.

Signage

Please use clear and simple signage.

