



An Australian Government Initiative



What is Dementia?

Dementia is **not** a natural part of ageing and it is not a mental illness. Dementia is a physical illness that is caused by damage to the brain. There are several forms of dementia; the most common forms are Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia. The symptoms of dementia may include memory loss, especially remembering recent events; and mood changes. People may feel sad, frightened or angry about what is happening to them. They may have trouble communicating, having difficulty finding the right words or slowly losing the ability to talk, read and write. Dementia affects each person differently and it is important to get a diagnosis as early as possible.

Where can I go to find out more?

Your **doctor** can give a full physical examination and organise blood tests. This will rule out or identify other possible medical conditions like depression, stress or infection which can also create similar symptoms to the early stages of dementia. Your doctor can test your memory or refer you to a specialist for further tests.

For information about dementia you can ring the **National Dementia Helpline** on 1800 100 500 delivered by Alzheimer's Australia (www.fightdementia.org.au). They can also provide support, education and counselling.

Your **Local Council** will have someone whose job it is to organise services for people caring for a person with dementia. They can also organise for the local Aged Care Assessment Team to visit and discuss your needs.

Interpreters can be arranged so that you can comfortably speak in your own language and obtain the information and assistance you require.

Information, help and support are available to you and your family. Remember, you are not alone and sharing your concerns and fears with someone who knows about dementia can be very helpful and comforting.

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