

Patient information

Dementia

Information for patients and carers

What is dementia?

Dementia is an umbrella term for a range of progressive conditions that affect the brain. There are over 200 different types of dementia, the five most common types are: Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, dementia with Lewy bodies, frontotemporal dementia and a mixed dementia.

Symptoms

Regardless of which type of dementia is diagnosed and what part of the brain is affected, each person will experience dementia in their own way.

Memory problems

People with dementia may have problems retaining new information. Day-to-day memory is affected, mainly recent events.

People may get lost in previously familiar places and may struggle with names.

Communication

People with dementia may be repetitive. They may have difficulty finding the right words, following a conversation, and lose the ability to read and write.

A formerly outgoing person might become quieter and more introverted. Their self-confidence might also be affected.

Cognitive ability

People with dementia may have difficulty recognising time and place; they may get

up in the middle of the night to go to work, even though they have retired. The ability to reason and make decisions may also be affected. Some people get a sense of restlessness and prefer to keep moving around rather than sitting still; others may be reluctant to take part in activities they used to enjoy.

Concentration can also be affected.

Getting a diagnosis

If someone is showing symptoms of dementia, visit a GP. There are some other treatable conditions which can present as dementia, including infections, thyroid problems, vitamin B12 deficiency, stress, anxiety and depression.

The GP will look at medical and family history and will do a cognitive screen.

They may request blood tests and a MRI/CT scan of the brain.

They may then refer the person to the memory assessment team for specialist investigations.

Generally, whilst your relative is an inpatient in hospital, they will not have specialist dementia assessments.

This is because the person is unwell which can exacerbate symptoms.

Can I prevent dementia?

Dementia is generally an age related condition, most cases are not inherited. There is some evidence that dementia can be delayed by lifestyle changes, a healthy diet, keep hydrated, don't smoke, avoid drinking too much alcohol and have cholesterol and blood pressure checks.

What can I do to support my relative whilst in hospital?

Coming into hospital can be disorientating and frightening and may make the person more confused than usual. Hospitals are unfamiliar and the person may not understand where they are or why they are here.

- Tell us that the person has dementia
- Share information with us about the person, such as daily habits, eating, sleeping preferences, anything that may distress the person and any preferred name.
- **Ask the staff for a patient profile form:** This contains information about the

person which enables us to deliver personalised care. Please ask the ward staff for a copy to complete.

- You are welcome to support the person on the ward, talk to the staff about visiting out of regular visiting times.

What are we doing at West Suffolk Foundation Trust to support people living with dementia?

- **Blue flower:** We are using a blue flower behind the bed on the information board to identify patients with dementia.
- **Staff training:** All our staff receive dementia training. We have identified dementia champions in most clinical areas.
- **Environment:** We are making the hospital 'dementia friendly' by improving our signage, some wards have coloured bays and we have installed a memory walk.

John's Campaign

We are promoting John's Campaign, which supports carers of people with dementia to stay with the person they care for whilst they are in hospital.

www.johnscampaign.org.uk

Carers

If you are a carer, please ask the ward staff for a 'Carers Pack' which contains a carers badge and information about support, parking and refreshment concessions etc.

Sources of information and support

Dementia Together

Practical information and support for people living with dementia regardless of a diagnosis.

Telephone: 08081 688 000

www.dementia-together.com

Alzheimer's Society

Support for people living with dementia. The website contains practical information.

Telephone Helpline: 0300 222 11 22

www.alzheimers.org.uk

Dementia Intensive Support Team (DIST)

NHS team working with people who have either a known or suspected dementia.
Telephone: 01284 733260

Suffolk Family Carers

Supports family carers
Telephone: 01473 835 477
www.suffolkfamilycarers.org.uk

Dementia UK

Practical information and support
<https://www.dementiauk.org/>

Adult Social Care Suffolk

Telephone: 0808 800 4005
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/adult-social-care-and-health/>

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)
<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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