

Patient information

Communication and dementia

People with dementia often experience difficulties with language and communication, which is likely to be further compounded by memory difficulties.

Some may include:

- Reduced attention
- Reduced or variable eye contact
- Forgetting the names of people or word finding difficulties
- Confusion between what is true and untrue
- Vocabulary used or understood can become limited over time
- Talk around a word i.e. describing functions rather than naming the item
- Incomplete sentences
- Difficulty expressing emotions



How can a speech and language therapist help with communication and dementia?

- Assess language skills and provide strategies
- Assess capacity to understand information and make decisions
- Help to maximise opportunities to express themselves
- Advise on the best way to communicate



How can you help the person with dementia?

- Use the individual's name to gain attention
- Sit face to face but respect personal space, make eye contact
- Avoid confrontation, allow the person with dementia to lead the conversation
- Check meaning, eg 'You said...you mean...?'
- Use questions that require a yes/no or one word answer
- Look for clues about the subject they are talking about, eg pointing, gesture, body language

- Use short, simple sentences
- Allow time for the individual to process information
- Allow time for the person to process instructions and respond
- Use real items to reinforce what you are talking about, this may also increase attention
- Non-verbal cues: use facial expressions and body language that matches what you are saying
- Offering reassurance through appropriate physical contact
- Speak in a calm, clear way but with animation, intonation and gesture
- Reminiscing about the past with the individual

Remember that for people with dementia, feelings are more important than facts. It is important that the conversations they have generate good feelings.

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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