

What is it?

Dementia causes a decline in brain function. It affects parts of the brain like memory, thinking, learning, language, swallowing and being able to go to the toilet. People with dementia may change the way they behave or react to things.

There are a few forms of dementia. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form. Alzheimer's gets worse with time. Dementia is not a normal part of ageing. It is different to mild decline. There is no cure, but treatments can help slow the disease and treat symptoms.

What will my GP do now?

You and your GP may talk about the next steps. Your GP may also:

- Arrange for tests which will provide more detail about the type of dementia you have
- Exclude any other health issues
- Talk to you about lifestyle changes that can help
- Give you a list of supports so you can learn more
- Give medication if needed

Your GP will also tell you how you can control any risks for other health issues common in people with dementia. Some medications can make brain function worse. Your GP may look at your medications and side effects. Your GP may also talk to you about [mild cognitive impairment](#) and [advance care planning](#).

Your GP may also help you manage your mental health and find supports if you are feeling scared or anxious.

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may see you again to check your symptoms and talk over the results of any tests. You may need to see a specialist or local health service. If, at any stage, your symptoms become worse, book a check-up with your GP. Your treatment plan will depend on the type of dementia you have and how serious it is.

What can I do?

Being told you have dementia can be scary and stressful. But there are things you can do now to look after your health and plan for the future. Read up about dementia, and think about who you may want to talk to. Ask your GP about supports and guides that can help you plan your next steps. Think about what this all means for your work, money, family and future health care. Ask your GP about advance care planning.

Living a healthy lifestyle will support your long-term health. Here are some things you can do now:

- Follow any lifestyle changes your GP suggests
- Eat a diet full of fresh, healthy foods
- Keep to a normal weight
- Drink plenty of water
- Move daily, and talk to your GP about the best workout for you

Dementia

What supports are available?

South Western Sydney has a range of aged care supports to help you.

Dementia support

The South Western Sydney Local Health District supports patients with dementia and their carers, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients. The supports can be accessed via My Aged Care. Phone **1800 200 422** or speak to your GP.

Aged Care Assessment Team

The team provides support for people with complex needs aged over 65 years. Phone **1800 200 422** or visit myagedcare.gov.au

Commonwealth Home Support Program

This program offers support for older people who need help to live in their homes. Speak to your GP about a how to join.

Private specialists

Your GP can refer you to a private specialist. These specialists are called geriatricians.

Specialist Aged Care Team

This team provides health care for people aged over 65. Phone **1800 200 422**.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- What supports are available?
- What if my symptoms get worse?
- How much exercise should I do every day?
- How do I make an advance care plan?
- What medications are available?
- Where can I go for help?



Where can I learn more?

Dementia Australia:

- About Dementia dementia.org.au
- National Dementia Helpline: dementia.org.au
- Planning Ahead – Start2Talk: dementia.org.au

Other resources:

- **Moving Pictures** – Dementia Awareness for CALD Communities: movingpictures.org.au
- **TEDGlobal** – How I'm Preparing to Get Alzheimer's: ted.com

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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