



# SENIOR LIVING

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Caring For Your Loved  
One With Dementia

SSA Educational Seminar



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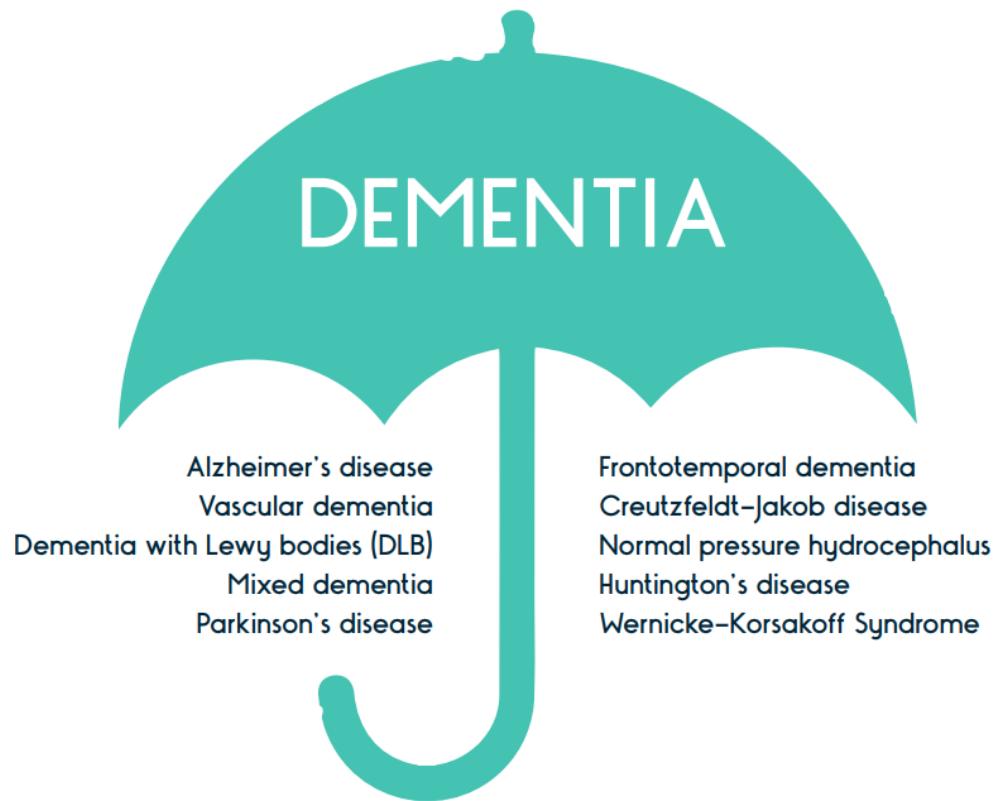
# Understanding Dementia

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# What is Dementia?

Dementia is an umbrella term for the general decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily activities. Memory loss would be an example of impairment.



A large population-based study suggests no gender differences in the incidence of dementia up to age 90.

Credit: pubmed.gov



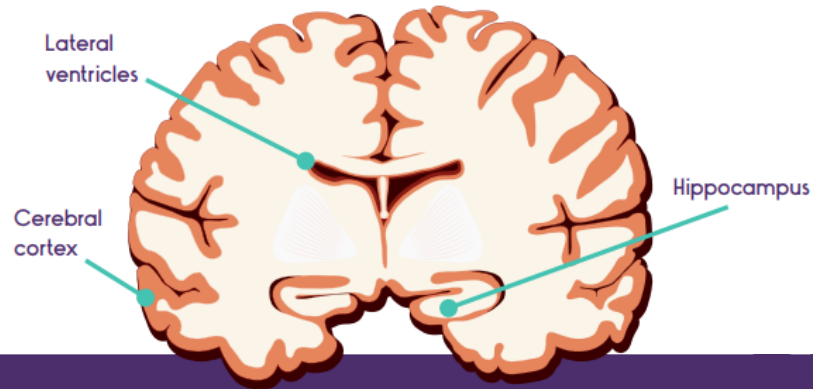
Risk increases with age with most cases diagnosed after age 65 however early onset patients have been diagnosed as early as their 40's or 50's.

Credit: alz.org

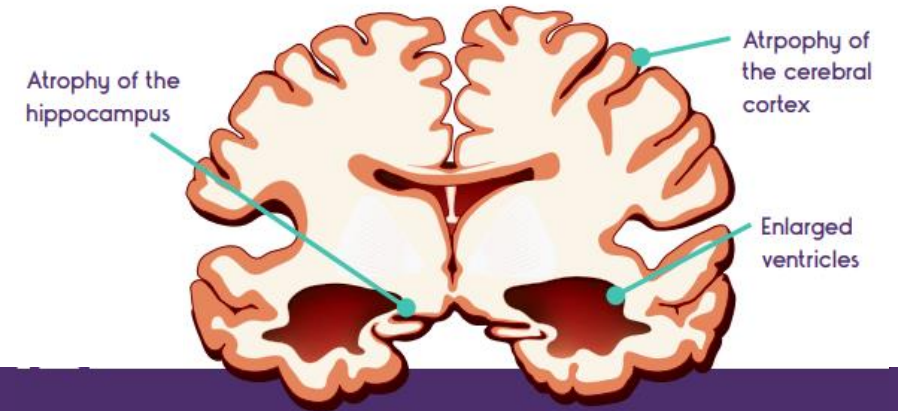


# Changes in the Brain

Healthy Brain



Brain with Dementia



Dementia impacts the aging process by deteriorating the brain and its functions to cause impairments in one or more functions. Normal aging does NOT include memory loss. Many people live long lives without cognitive changes or changes that affect their activities of daily living (ADL)

Dementia affects many parts of the brain and each person is affected differently. Each part of the brain plays a critical piece of cognitive and functional ability. Changes can include:



Memory

Perception



Language & Speech

Comprehension



Sight

Mobility and agility



# The 7 Stages of Dementia

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# The 7 Stages of Dementia

Dementia is most often diagnosed using The Global Deterioration Scale for Assessment of Primary Degenerative Dementia (GDS). This scale assesses the varying stages of memory loss and the ability of the brain to function properly, identifying seven stages of dementia. GDS has proven to be the most useful test for specifically diagnosing Alzheimer's disease, but it can be helpful for other forms of dementia diagnoses as well.

## Stage 1: No Cognitive Decline

Stage 1 is extremely mild and undetectable. There are no signs of memory loss, poor cognitive functions, or unusual behaviors.

## Stage 2: Very Mild Cognitive Decline

During stage 2, slow cognitive decline typically begins. However, the symptoms may not be obvious to anyone other than the person experiencing them.

In stage 2, the most common symptom is forgetfulness, which might be easy to ignore as a symptom of dementia.



# The 7 Stages of Dementia

## Stage 3: Mild Cognitive Decline

In this stage, cognitive decline becomes more noticeable to both the person experiencing symptoms and outsiders.

In stage 3, common symptoms include:

- Forgetfulness
- Decreased work performance
- Difficulty speaking
- Difficulty focusing on normal tasks





# The 7 Stages of Dementia

## Stage 4: Early-Stage, Moderate Decline Dementia

Stage 4 is well-known as “early dementia”, marked by the onset of moderate cognitive decline. Most often, patients experience stage 4 symptoms for as long as two years.

“Early dementia” symptoms include:

- Clear signs of forgetfulness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Easily losing track of time and place
- Difficulty managing finances
- Afraid of being alone, traveling, new places/things
- Difficulty in social situations
- Withdrawing from family/friends



# The 7 Stages of Dementia

## Stage 5: Mid-Stage, Moderately Severe Dementia

Stage 5 is known as “middle dementia” where the symptoms are easily identified. Patients in “middle dementia” require full-time assistance to complete daily living activities.

As “middle dementia” approaches, you might consider moving your loved one to a memory care living community to ensure proper care and that cognitive needs are being met.

A major symptom of “middle dementia” is the loss of short-term memory.

## Stage 6: Mid-Stage, Severe Dementia

During stage 6, the symptoms of “middle dementia” begin to worsen. The person suffering may begin to:

- Forget names of close friends and family
- Have trouble recalling recent events
- Experience delusions, compulsions, anxiety, or agitation
- Experience frequent and intense personality or emotional changes
- Have difficulty speaking or communicating
- Lose bladder control



# The 7 Stages of Dementia

## Stage 7: Late-Stage, Very Severe Dementia

Stage 7 is considered “late dementia” and is identified by a severe cognitive decline.

Patients in “late dementia” need around-the-clock care because they cannot complete simple daily tasks, like communicating or walking on their own.

If assisted living or memory care has not already been established, caregivers should consider looking into the available options.



# How Quickly Does Dementia Progress?

Throughout each stage of Dementia, the signs that present themselves can last for different lengths of time.

The beginning stages (stage 1 and stage 2) are difficult to identify for the average person, so that makes it harder to pinpoint an expected duration of these stages.

However, once “early dementia” hits, patients tend to stay in each stage for about two years before progressing to the next one.

Some stages can last a little longer (stage 3 can last up to 7 years) while others might be a bit shorter (stage 6 can last around a year or less).

The most important thing to note is that symptoms can progress differently from person to person.



# Caring for a Loved One with Dementia

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# Caregiving During the Early Stages

During the early stages of dementia, people typically experience very mild symptoms. Because most people continue to function independently, the symptoms may not even be noticeable in the very beginning.

As dementia progresses through the early stages, people likely experience:

- Mild forgetfulness
- Difficulty staying on task and focusing

As a caregiver, you can simply provide support and companionship. You might also consider planning for the future as the disease progresses.



# Caregiving During the Middle Stages

As cognitive function begins to decline in a more obvious way, your loved one could show symptoms like:

- More forgetfulness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Easily losing track of time or whereabouts
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Fearing being alone or in new places

As a caregiver, you might recognize that your loved one:

- Needs more help completing daily tasks
- Is becoming less independent; and
- Needs frequent reminders

If your loved one is still living at home, you might consider the beginning steps of moving them to a senior living community. In the meantime, you can follow our tips to alleviate some of the stress of caring for your loved one and help make the small moments meaningful.



# Tips for Dementia Caregivers

- Structure your loved one's day. **People with dementia respond well to routine.** Plan day to day activities around personal care and keep the routine as much as possible.
- Celebrate small successes. Give praise and **celebrate small victories** throughout the day.
- Stay positive and realistic. There may be bad days. Your mental health may suffer as you experience burdened or lonely feelings. Accept these feelings as normal and **focus on small positive moments** with your loved one.
- Plan activities that you can do with your loved one that will be fun and successful for the person with dementia. **Here is a list of simple activities you can do at home:**
  - Flip through old photos of family members and have your loved one tell you stories of the photos. Do not correct them if their story doesn't match yours.
  - Play a board game. Something simple like dominoes, or checkers. Be realistic, the game may not go your way, but they will feel the victory.
  - Cut out pictures from magazines of vacation destinations. Paste them to construction paper and hold a conversation about your best vacations.
  - Give your loved on a manicure or a shave. Make it feel like a high-end spa, or professional barber shop.
  - Prepare a flower bouquet and deliver to a relative or friend.





# Tips for Effective Communication

Communicating with a person with dementia can be tricky, particularly as the disease progresses.

In the earlier stages of the disease, a person with dementia might just struggle to find the right word or rely on body language like gestures to communicate. Later on, your loved one may be fully reliant on nonverbal communication like facial expressions and vocal sounds.

No matter what stage of the disease your loved one is in, you should **speak slowly, maintain eye contact, and give the person plenty of time to respond.**

## Tips for Effective Communication:

- Use a friendly tone of voice to lighten the mood
- Avoid open-ended questions
- Do not talk down to the person
- Do not finish the person's sentences
- Use cueing or demonstrating to help when a person struggles
- Ask – NEVER tell
- Listening is the most important part of Dementia communication
  - Listen for emotions and feelings
  - Focus on the feeling not what they are saying



# Caregiving During the Late Stages

Around-the-clock care for in-home caregivers becomes nearly impossible as a person begins to exhibit the last stages of dementia.

When a person reaches the end stages of dementia, it's not uncommon for social support to diminish and the feeling of isolation to increase in this phase.

For caregivers, care may begin to feel like it's consuming most, if not all, of their time. Although confused, your loved one can likely feel the same stressors.

Transitioning into a senior living community is one of the most difficult decisions a family can make, but it can also be the most beneficial for everyone involved.

The intensive care required to mitigate the symptoms of end-stage dementia, when provided by professional care staff, can allow caregivers the space and emotional energy to spend quality time with your loved one.



# Dealing with Caregiver Guilt

Caring for a loved one with memory loss is a demanding experience fraught with worry and frustration. Guilty feelings can interfere with healthy and effective decision-making day to day.

Recognizing the guilt surrounding the caregiving journey can help you learn to manage those feelings, allowing you to be more objective in your daily interactions with your loved one.

Here are some things you can do to help manage caregiver guilt:

- Recognize the feelings for what they are. When the source of guilty feelings is recognized, they become more manageable.
- Identify how the feelings of guilt are affecting your caregiver's experience.
- Although guilt can affect decision making, don't second guess yourself.
- Don't expect to be perfect. You will feel resentful, angry and lonely at times.
- Pay attention to these feelings and accept them as normal.
- Seek help from professionals and support groups. Spending more time with people who can provide outside support and guidance can be helpful.

Above all remember, **you are doing the very best job that you can.** Give yourself credit for all that you do.



# How Can Senior Living Help?

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# Memory Care vs Assisted Living

- Assisted living is for older adults that require help with the **activities of daily living** - but not extensive medical care, like you might find in skilled nursing home care. Assisted Living communities provide a healthy social environment with a calendar full of life enrichment activities, exercise classes, and family events.
- Memory care communities are like assisted living communities, but they specifically serve seniors living with dementia. Residents in the earlier stages of the disease may be able to live in an assisted living community, but **staff training in memory care units tends to be geared towards a higher level of care**. Staff members in memory care communities are trained to care for older adults with all forms of dementia.
- When researching or touring communities, you should consider if it was created with memory care in mind. **Residents with later stages of dementia are at a higher risk for elopement**, a term used to describe a person with memory issues leaving a safe area. This can be quite dangerous as it may lead to the resident being lost or injured. If this is the case for your loved one, an assisted living community likely isn't the best option.
- Memory care communities are highly secure, always remaining locked, with no way for patients to wander off. Having said that, **a good memory care community will have lots of safe spaces for the residents to enjoy freely**. For instance, there may be smaller areas where residents will feel secure or beautiful outdoor areas that do not allow access off the grounds.



# What Does Memory Care Offer?

Our Memory Care Program's holistic approach in caring for people with dementia is based on **Eight Core Components**. These proven components help support and comfort our residents and enrich their daily lives.

1. Personal care and activities of daily living
2. Social interaction
3. Emotional support
4. Physical activity
5. Mental stimulation
6. Life-enrichment activities
7. Artistic expression
8. Good nutrition



# What Does Memory Care Offer?

## Individualized Care Plans

Every memory care resident has unique needs based on their personal, medical and environmental circumstances. We offer an enhanced care plan to help identify, monitor and attend to your loved one's daily needs.

## Safety & Security

Our memory care community helps your loved one feel safe. All doors are linked to a secure coded system, to help safeguard residents leaving the premises by accident or chance. Having said that, our community also provides easy access and unhindered mobility for our residents.

## Customized Activities

We offer activities specially designed to enrich and enhance the lives of our memory care residents.

## Meals

Three healthy, tasty meals and nutritious snacks are included daily.



# What Does Memory Care Offer?

## 24-Hour Licensed Care

Whether administering routine medication during the day or attending to the unexpected during the night, nurses and care staff are on hand around the clock to address your loved one's medical and personal needs.

## On-Site Specialists

We'll schedule on-site visits from a trusted professional specializing in Alzheimer's, Dementia and related disorders as needed

## On-Site Therapy

We can arrange for physical, occupational and speech therapy in-house without the inconvenience of travel.

## Incontinence Program

We offer an incontinence program that includes sanitary supplies and prompt personal attention. By providing the supplies, you don't need to worry about making last minute trips—and our products are guaranteed for quality and appropriate fit for your loved one.





# Moving Your Loved One With Dementia to Memory Care

## 1. Establish Where Your Loved One Is in Their Dementia Diagnosis

- If your loved one is early on in their dementia diagnosis, you may find that an assisted living community will meet their needs. Having said that, you need to consider that it may become less manageable to care for your loved one in the later stages of the disease. In this case, they may need to move to a specialized memory care community.

## 2. Initiate Conversations About Moving

- Moving can be emotional, difficult, and, at times, overwhelming. The sooner a conversation about moving is initiated, the smoother the moving process becomes – for everyone.

## 3. Find a Community You Trust

- When searching for a community, be sure they have the capacity, resources and ability to care for residents with dementia. *The last thing you want to do is have to move your loved one twice.* Take the time to research and find the best community for your loved one.

## 4. Make a Few Visits to the Community Prior to Moving

- Visit a few times. *Check things out.* Help your loved one find points of comfort in the community that allows an opportunity to develop familiarity with some friendly faces.

## 5. Work to Establish Relationships With Future Caregivers

- Encourage a time or space for your loved one to share their story with a caregiver. The more personal information and stories shared with the caregiver in the beginning, the easier it will be for the caregiver to provide meaningful moments and connect with your loved one.



# Moving Your Loved One With Dementia to Memory Care

## 6. Keep the Logistics of the Move to a Minimum for Your Loved One

- *Associations are important.* If the first day of your loved one's new life is hectic and scary, their transition is going to be negatively impacted. The logistics may get complicated but try to make the transition as smooth as possible for your loved one.

## 7. Pack Intentionally

- Of course, it isn't wise to try and bring the whole house into the new room or apartment, but don't spare the few mementos that will make the new space feel like home. Especially on bad days, it is comforting for a person with dementia to be surrounded by familiar items that bring them comfort and memories.

## 8. Be Prepared for Bumps or Bad Days

- *Be patient.* Bad days and negative comments about the new situation will become less frequent as you're your loved one becomes adjusted to their new home. Keep in mind that your loved one is surrounded by skilled and compassionate caregivers who are there to provide them with the best experience possible.

## 9. Remain Calm and Positive on Move-In Day

- Remaining calm and having a positive demeanor will significantly help your loved one through the move-in process.

## 10. Acknowledge the Transition Will Take Time

- It will take time for your loved one to feel acclimated to their new living situation. If you've chosen the right community, it will begin to feel like home in no time.





ANY  
QUESTIONS?