

WHAT IS IT?

General term for loss of memory and other mental abilities severe enough to interfere with daily life.

Caused by physical changes in the brain that result in a decline in 'thinking skills' (cognitive abilities) and may impact behavior, feelings and relationships as well.

ALZHEIMER'S

The most common type but there are many other kinds of dementia. Ask your doctor to clarify your specific type.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

There is no cure for Alzheimer's disease or a way to stop its progression, but there are drug and non-drug options to treat the symptoms. Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

Here are some questions to ask:

- 1 What treatment options are available and which best fit my situation?
- 2 How will I know if the treatment is effective?
- 3 Are there any side effects I should look for with the medication prescribed?
- 4 What stage of dementia am I in?
- 5 When should I call you?

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT? SLEEP CHANGES

 Aim to improve sleep routine and environment to reduce daytime napping

Difficulty Sleeping:

Wandering, yelling or calling out

Shifts in the sleep/wake cycle: Feeling drowsy during the day and unable to sleep at night, sun-downing, some people have a complete reversal of the usual daytime wakefulness-nighttime sleep pattern.

Sundowning: Restlessness or agitation in the late afternoon or early evening

Sleep Medications- Use with caution for people with cognitive impairment. Risks include falls and fractures, confusion and a decline in the ability to care for yourself. Consult your doctor before using any sleep medication.

Try these non-drug options to treat sleep changes:

- ✓ Maintain regular meal times and sleep/wake times
- ✓ Seek morning sunlight exposure
- ✓ Get moving!- Exercise daily but not too close to bedtime (within 4 hours)
- ✓ Avoid alcohol, caffeine and nicotine
- ✓ Manage your pain
- ✓ Make sure the bedroom temperature is comfortable
- ✓ Provide nightlights and security objects
- ✓ Use the bed only for sleep- Discourage staying in bed while awake
- ✓ Discourage watching television during periods of wakefulness

Don't ignore memory difficulty or other changes in thinking!

Many dementias start slowly and gradually get worse (progressive). Early diagnosis can detect treatable conditions and allow the most benefit from available dementia treatments, allowing time to plan for the future.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
PLEASE VIEW THE BACK SIDE
OF THIS PAGE**

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT? BEHAVIOR CHANGES

 Aim to identify and address needs that are difficult to communicate as the disease progresses.

People may experience the following:

Anger Anxiety Depression Irritability Physical or verbal outbursts Restlessness or pacing
Shredding paper or tissues Hallucinations Delusions Sleep Issues Sundowning

Try these non-drug options to treat behavior changes:

- ✓ **Monitor personal comfort.** Check for pain, hunger, thirst, constipation, full bladder, fatigue, infections and skin irritation. Maintain a comfortable room temperature.
- ✓ **Avoid being confrontational or arguing about facts.** For example, if a person expresses a wish to go visit a parent who died years ago, don't point out that the parent is dead. Instead, say, "Your mother is a wonderful person. I would like to see her too."
- ✓ **Redirect the person's attention.** Try to remain flexible, patient and supportive by responding to the emotion, not the behavior.
- ✓ **Create a calm environment.** Avoid noise, glare, insecure space and too much background distraction, including television.
- ✓ **Allow adequate rest** between stimulating events.
- ✓ **Provide a security object.**
- ✓ **Acknowledge requests,** and respond to them. Don't ignore the person!
- ✓ **Look for reasons behind each behavior.** Consult a physician to identify any causes related to medications or illness.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT? COMMUNICATION CHANGES

 Aim for patience, understanding and good listening skills

Common Communication challenges:

Difficulty finding the right words Using familiar words repeatedly Describing familiar objects rather than calling them by name Easily losing a train of thought
Difficulty organizing words logically Reverting to speaking a native language Speaking less often Relying on gestures more than speaking

Try these tips to communicate with a person with Dementia:

- ✓ **Treat the person with dignity and respect.** Avoid talking down to the person or act as if they aren't there.
- ✓ **Approach the person from the front and identify yourself**
- ✓ **Try to talk in a quiet area and minimize distractions.**
- ✓ **Speak slowly, clearly and give the person time to respond.**
- ✓ **Ask one question at a time and use Yes/NO questions if possible-** "Would you like some coffee?" Rather than "What do you want to drink?"
- ✓ **Don't criticize or correct.** Repeat what was said to clarify if needed.
- ✓ **Use short sentences and gestures or written words to help clarify.**
- ✓ **In later stages, non-verbal communication** (pointing, gestures) and engaging the senses (sights, smells, sounds, and tastes) may be all the person is capable of.
- ✓ **It's OK if you don't know what to say; your presence and friendship are most important!**

**EDUCATION
& SUPPORT:**

**ALZHEIMER'S
ASSOCIATION**

bit.ly/Alzheimers-Association

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**Alzheimers Association
24/7 helpline
(800) 272-3900**