WHAT IS DEMENTIA?
Our brains control everything we think, feel, remember and do.

There are diseases that stop a person's brain from working properly. When a person has one of these diseases, they may have problems thinking, remembering and speaking. They might say or do things that seem strange to others, and find it harder to do everyday things. They may not seem like the person they used to be.

When these problems get worse over time, doctors may use the word dementia to describe them.

Dementia is not something that just happens to everyone as they get older. It is caused by different diseases. These diseases affect different parts of the brain, so they affect people in different ways.

WHO IS AFFECTED BY DEMENTIA?
Dementia can affect anyone.

Almost 1,000,000 people in the UK have dementia.

In the UK there are MORE WOMEN with dementia than men.

PEOPLE OVER 65 are much more likely to get dementia, but it can affect younger people too.

HOW DOES DEMENTIA AFFECT SOMEONE?
Most of us forget things from time to time, like where we left our keys. This does not mean we have dementia. When someone has dementia, symptoms slowly get worse so that they get in the way of daily life.

When people have dementia, you might see some of these happen:

- Forgetting recent events, names and faces.
- Asking the same questions often in a short space of time.
- Putting things in the wrong place.
- Finding it hard to pay attention or make simple decisions.
- Not being sure about the date or time of day.
- Getting lost, mostly in places that are new.
- Finding it hard to use the right words or understand other people’s words.
- Changes in how someone feels, like becoming sad or easily upset, or losing interest in things.
**WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?**

Doctors and scientists are working hard to find out more about dementia – including its causes.

Some people may be more likely to develop dementia than others, like those who have had a stroke, or who have:

- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- depression.

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**IS THERE A CURE?**

**AT THE MOMENT THERE ARE NO MEDICINES THAT CAN SLOW DEMENTIA IN THE UK**

Once a person has dementia, they will have it for the rest of their life. They will also continue to get worse over time.

There are some medicines that can help for a while, by making day-to-day life a little easier. There may also be group activities people can take part in to help them live better with their symptoms. Your doctor can tell you more about these.

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**CAN I STOP MYSELF GETTING DEMENTIA?**

There is no sure fire way to stop anyone from getting dementia. But there are things we can do that may make it less likely that we will.

- Ask your doctor to check your heart health, including blood pressure and cholesterol and follow their advice if they are too high.
- If you have diabetes, keep to your doctor’s advice.
- Don’t smoke.
- Keep your weight healthy.
- Eat a balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- Keep using your brain – through activities or social groups you enjoy.
- Stay active and try not to spend too long sitting down.
- Drink less than 14 units of alcohol per week.

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**WHERE TO GO FOR HELP**

If you think someone you know may have dementia, encourage them to see their doctor.

The doctor will check what might be causing their problems. Sometimes, the person might be sent to a second doctor who can tell them if they have dementia. You can go with your relative or friend if they ask you to.

If the doctor says anything you’re not sure about, you can ask them to explain.

Caring for someone with dementia

Looking after someone with dementia can change your life in many ways. There is help for everyone affected by dementia, including family members. It’s important to remember you’re not alone.

Your doctor may be able to help you find support in your area. You can also contact your local Social Services office to see what help they can give you.

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Here are some other useful contacts:

- **Admiral Nurses** offer people with dementia and their families practical advice, support and tips. **0800 888 6678**
- **Alzheimer’s Society** provides information, help and local support groups. A translation service is available. **0300 150 3456**
- **Alzheimer Scotland** offers support services, information and advice to people in Scotland. **0808 808 3000**