

Living with Dementia

A Resource Kit for Caregivers

KNOWING DEMENTIA AND BUILDING A DEMENTIA FRIENDLY SINGAPORE

A Dementia Friendly Singapore Initiative



How can this kit help you?

This kit, written in four parts, compiles information, practical tips, activities and resources on dementia to support you in caring for your loved one with dementia. It is designed to address challenging concerns and issues to help you better cope with your caregiving journey, ensuring your loved one receives the best possible care.

While dementia may not be curable, it is possible to slow down the progression with activities, therapies and medication. Remember that you are not alone in this caregiving journey.

If you know of someone who might need help or would like to find out more about the support and services for dementia, contact us at careinmind@aic.sg or at the Singapore Silver Line at 1800 6506060.

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DEMENTIA AWARENESS

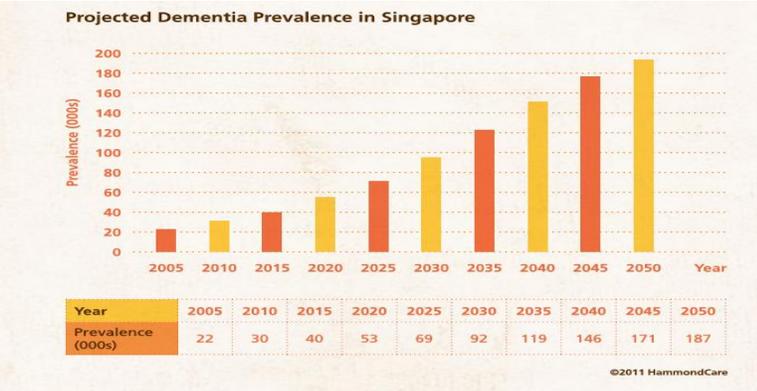
WHAT IS DEMENTIA?

Dementia is an illness that affects the brain and is not a natural part of ageing. Persons living with dementia eventually lose the ability to:

- Think and reason,
- Remember new information or recall past events,
- Care for oneself,
- Learn new information and skills,
- Problem-solve and make judgements.

Dementia can affect adults of any age, but it is more common in those aged 65 and above.

Today, there are 28,000 people aged 60 years and above living with dementia. By 2030, there will be 80,000 persons living with dementia. In the recent Well-being of the Singapore Elderly (WiSE) nationwide study, the prevalence of dementia was found to be **10% in the elderly population** aged 60 years and above.



TYPES OF DEMENTIA

Dementia occurs when several changes take place in the brain. There are different types of dementia, each with different causes and symptoms. Being aware of the common types and their diagnosis could help you to better cater to your loved one's needs.

Type of Dementia	Description
Alzheimer's Disease	Alzheimer's Disease damages brain cells. It is associated primarily with memory loss and other intellectual abilities which interfere with daily life.
Vascular Dementia	Vascular dementia results in the decline of thinking skills due to conditions that block or reduce blood flow to the brain, depriving brain cells of oxygen and nutrients. It is often associated with strokes.
Lewy Body Dementia	Protein deposits, known as Lewy bodies, develop in nerve cells in regions of the brain involved in cognition, memory and movement. Apart from the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, Lewy Body Dementia can result in symptoms similar to Parkinson's disease.
Fronto-temporal Dementia	Fronto-temporal Dementia refers to a group of disorders caused by progressive nerve cell loss in the front and side regions of the brain, often resulting in personality changes and behavioural issues.
Alcohol-related Dementia	It is a cognitive disorder caused by severe deficiency of vitamin B-1. It is most commonly caused by alcohol misuse.

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

ABCDs of Dementia at Different Stages

There are several stages of dementia, with the experience different for each person. In all types of dementia, memory problems are the early signs. The deterioration in cognitive skills is gradual and in later stages, daily activities will become increasingly challenging without assistance.

Common Signs & Symptoms of Dementia	Stages		
	Mild	Moderate	Advanced
Activities of Daily Living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still able to care for self in basic activities of daily living, i.e. personal hygiene, dressing • But may have some difficulty with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Taking public transportation ✓ Money management ✓ Preparing meals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires assistance with dressing, personal hygiene, feeding, etc. • High risk of falling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to care for own hygiene, feeding oneself, going to the toilet, taking a shower. • Likely to have mobility issues, could be bed-bound
Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apathy; lack of interest in activities they used to engage in • Rapid mood changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wandering • Repetitive actions/questions • Sleep reversal • Frustration at not being able to communicate well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crying, shouting or repetitive vocalisation as a means to communicate needs • Refusing care due to confusion

Common Signs & Symptoms of Dementia	Stages		
	Mild	Moderate	Advanced
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May appear depressed, easily agitated, suspicious 	
Cognitive Decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgetfulness (short-term memory loss) • Reduced judgement • Difficulty in following storylines and conversations • Impaired abstract thinking • Difficulty finding the right words • Misplacing things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vague long-term memory • Unable to recognise certain family members • Difficulty in communication due to one's repetitive speech or inability to understand contexts • Unable to remember own address or phone number 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to recognise current self • Unable to communicate through language. May also be uncommunicative • Sometimes unresponsive • Unable to recognise common objects
Disorientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasionally feeling disoriented, but able to navigate between frequently visited places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets confused with concept of time • Gets lost in familiar places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to differentiate day and night

Normal Ageing vs. Dementia

How can you differentiate the normal ageing process from the symptoms of dementia?

Normal Ageing Memory Changes	Behaviours and Symptoms that may Indicate Dementia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Still able to pursue daily activities and function independently, despite occasional memory lapses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Difficulty in performing simple daily tasks, i.e. paying bills, dressing appropriately and washing up. ● Forgetting how to do things that they are normally very familiar with.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● May require some time to remember directions and/or navigate new places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gets lost or appears disoriented in familiar places and is unable to follow directions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Still capable in judgement and decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Has difficulty choosing when presented with many choices, may demonstrate improper judgement or socially inappropriate behaviour.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Able to recall and describe significant events and instances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unable to recall or describe instances, especially with more recent events.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● May occasionally have difficulty finding the right word but has no problem in holding a conversation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Frequently forgets, misuses or garbles words. ● Repeats phrases and stories unknowingly in the same conversation.

LOWERING YOUR RISK OF GETTING DEMENTIA

These are some tips on how you can keep your mind active and lower the risk of developing dementia.

1. Physical Activity

Exercising regularly will make your heart and blood circulatory system more efficient. It will also help to lower cholesterol and maintain your blood pressure at a healthy level, decreasing the risk of developing vascular dementia.

2. Brain Activity

Keep your mind active. Mentally stimulating activities, such as puzzles, Sudoku and other word games serve as cognitive training that may offset or delay the setting in of dementia.

Enjoy some of these brain games. <https://www.lumosity.com/>

3. Connectivity

Be physically and socially active. Physical activity and social interaction may delay the onset of dementia.

4. Diet

Maintain a healthy diet. Having a healthy diet is important for many reasons, but a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and omega-3 fatty acids – commonly found in certain fish and nuts – may promote overall health and offset or delay the setting in of dementia.

GETTING A DIAGNOSIS

How to Start a Conversation about Getting a Diagnosis

If you suspect your loved one is suffering from dementia, or displaying the described signs and symptoms, you should get them properly diagnosed and treated. However, starting a conversation with someone on the issue of memory loss and possibly dementia may require sensitive consideration. Often, someone experiencing the signs and symptoms of dementia may feel worried, helpless or in denial.

To encourage someone to talk when you're worried about how their memory loss has affected them, you can:

- 1. Have the conversation in a familiar and relaxing place.**
- 2. Cite examples of their behaviour to initiate awareness.**
- 3. Have a frank conversation to discuss their needs and issues.**

You do not need to get the person to agree to visit a doctor for a diagnosis in just one session. This is a difficult development to process, so it may take some time for the person to accept it.

Here are some questions that you may use to start the conversation:

- **You seem worried; how can I help?**
- **You don't seem yourself today, how are you feeling?**
- **Are you ok? You seem to be concerned about something.**

Being diagnosed with dementia may come as a surprise to someone at first. However, with a clear diagnosis, persons living with dementia can get the information and support needed to manage the symptoms. Although there is currently no cure for dementia, early treatment and management makes it possible to slow down the rate of deterioration.

Depending on the senior's comfort level, sharing concerns with family members early in the conversation can:

- Coax the senior to obtain a diagnosis and seek support.
- Prepare family members early for the caregiving role.

- Help both the senior and the caregiver(s) to plan for the future ahead.

Seeking a Diagnosis

You may obtain a professional diagnosis by:

1. Contacting any of the memory clinics in Singapore in the table below.

<p>Tan Tock Seng Hospital</p> <p>Geriatric Medicine Clinic [basement 1] 11 Jalan Tan Tock Seng Singapore 308433</p> <p>Tel: 6359 6100 Fax: 6359 6101</p>	<p>Institute of Mental Health</p> <p>Psychogeriatric Clinic 10 Buangkok View Singapore 539747</p> <p>Tel: 6389 2200 Fax: 6385 1075</p>	<p>National University Hospital</p> <p>Neuroscience Clinic 5b Lower Kent Ridge Road Singapore 119074</p> <p>Tel: 6779 5555 Fax: 6779 5678</p>
<p>Changi General Hospital</p> <p>Geriatric Clinic 2 Simei Street 3 Singapore 529889</p> <p>Tel: 6850 3510 Fax: 6787 2141</p>	<p>Singapore General Hospital</p> <p>Department of Neurology Outram Road Singapore 169036</p> <p>Tel: 6321 4377 Fax: 6220 3321</p> <p>appointments@sgh.com.sg</p>	<p>NNI @ TTSH Campus</p> <p>Neuroscience Clinic, Level 1 National Neuroscience Institute 11 Jalan Tan Tock Seng Singapore 308433</p> <p>For appointment Tel: (65) 6357 7095 Fax: (65) 6357 7103</p> <p>appointments@nni.com.sg</p>
<p>Ng Teng Fong Hospital</p> <p>Geriatric Medicine 1 Jurong East Street 21 Singapore 609606</p> <p>Tel: 6716 2000 (24 hours) Tel: 6716 2222 (appointment)</p>		

2. Approaching local General practitioners (GPs) who are certified to support and provide mental health assessments and diagnosis.

The list of GPs can be found here <http://www.silverpages.sg/mhdirectory>

3. Calling the following helplines for more information.
 - a) **HealthLine by Health Promotion Board (HPB):** 1800-223-1313
 - b) **Singapore Silver Line:** 1800-650-6060
 - c) **Dementia Helpline by Alzheimer's Disease Association:** 6377 0700

TREATING DEMENTIA

Presently, there is no cure for dementia. There are, however, drugs that may help improve mental function, mood or behaviour and slow down the symptomatic progression of the disease.

Although slight improvements or stabilisation of symptoms can at times be seen, these ultimately do not put a stop to the disease or restore mental health.

The following are the medications used to relieve some symptoms of dementia:

Acetylcholinesterase Inhibitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Help maintain mental function● Donepezil (Aricept), Rivastigmine (Exelon) and Galantamine (Reminyl)● Primarily to treat mild to moderate stages of the disease although there is also evidence of effectiveness in advanced dementia <p><i>*Exelon is available in a patch form to be stuck onto the skin</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Treat moderate to advanced

<p style="text-align: center;">Memantine</p>	<p>stages of the disease</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alternative if patients cannot tolerate Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors ● Can be used on its own or in combination with Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors
<p style="text-align: center;">Antipsychotics, Antidepressants, Mood Stabilisers and Sedatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Used to treat various challenging and disruptive behaviours such as anxiety, aggression, agitation and sleep problems

All medications have side effects. Consult your doctor or pharmacist on what they are. **Do not make adjustments to your loved one's medication routine without seeking medical advice first.**

Tips on Medication Management

Here are some tips about medication management in persons living with dementia. Do not hesitate to consult your pharmacist for more information.

1. If your loved one forgets to take his or her medication, administer it as soon as you can. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and resume at the next dose. **Do not double the dose to make up for the missed dose.** Take note of missed or irregular doses and share it with the medical team looking after your loved one.
2. Inform the doctor and pharmacist if your loved one is taking any other chronic medication, herbal preparations, supplements or nutritional products, as these may interact with his or her medications. **There needs to be transparency between you and the doctor to avoid conflicts in medications.**

3. **Use a timetable to take note of when your loved one has to take his or her medication.** This will be especially helpful if your loved one has a lot of medications, and when the main caregiver has to pass on caregiving duties to other family members during times of respite or overseas travel.
4. As a caregiver, **it is important for you to be aware of possible side effects of medication and to look out for them.** Your loved one may have difficulty finding the words to alert you to any side effects he or she is going through.
5. **Take note of medications that may cause drowsiness,** as this may increase the risk of falling, especially in elderly patients.
6. **Be attentive to special storage instructions.** It is important to store medication in a cool and dry place, away from direct light and heat. Some medication may require refrigerated storage conditions.
7. **Administer medication as per the doctor's instruction.** Do not stop any medication without first consulting the doctor or pharmacist.

Palliative Care

Palliative care focuses on improving a person's quality of life by relieving pain, discomfort or distress. It is delivered through a multidisciplinary medical team consisting of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, social workers and counsellors, to address your loved one's holistic needs:

- Physical
- Psychological
- Social
- Financial; *and*
- Spiritual concerns of patients and families.

Palliative care specialists who work in hospices may also provide specialist input if needed.

BUILDING A DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY SINGAPORE

Together, we can build a more inclusive community.

Be Aware. Be Kind. Be Understanding.

'Like' the Dementia-Friendly Singapore Facebook page for more information and guides. Leave a message on our Facebook page to get in touch!

WHAT IS A DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY SINGAPORE?

Our Ageing Population in Singapore

Globally, there are 46.8 million people living with dementia. This number is expected to double every 20 years, according to The Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI)'s World Alzheimer Report 2015 titled '*The Global Impact of Dementia*'.

In Singapore, the prevalence of dementia is about 10% amongst elder individuals aged 60 years and above. **With a rapidly ageing population, dementia is an issue that we should pay more attention to.**

How Can a Dementia-Friendly Singapore Support You and Your Loved One?

A Dementia-Friendly Singapore **encourages persons living with dementia to continue living in their own homes and go about their usual routines** in the community. This involves the community's members – neighbours, shopkeepers, coffee-shop drink sellers, bank tellers – who can understand and help them.

A Dementia-Friendly Community (DFC) is a Community Where:

People are aware of this condition and understand how to make the environment of their neighbourhoods safe and easy to navigate through. **It's a place where persons living with dementia and their caregivers can live as independently as possible, while feeling:**

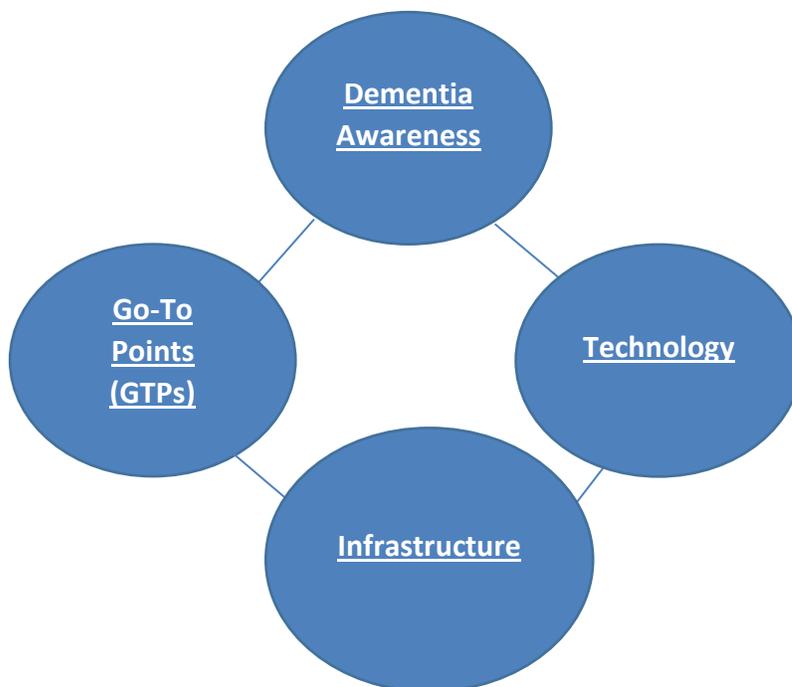
Safe	Comfortable	Loved	Respected
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Business and services will be respectful towards persons living with dementia. Resources will exist for early recognition and support for persons living with dementia.

Seniors can reduce risk of dementia with readily accessible active ageing activities. Persons living with dementia can be identified early and appropriate care and support will be provided.

This is a community that reaches out to its neighbours and seeks to help people affected by this condition in coping with their struggles, without patronising anyone.

The DFC model is made up of four key components:



Dementia Awareness

- A network of **Dementia Friends** who are aware of the ABCD signs and symptoms of dementia. You can serve as community lookouts for persons living with dementia and know how to communicate with persons living with dementia.
- Dementia Friends can build on their skills to become **Dementia Champions** to support seniors or persons living with dementia by befriending or engaging them in activities.

Go-To Points (GTPs)

- Go-To Points also serve as “**safe return**” **points within the community**, where you can bring persons living with dementia who may appear lost and are unable to identify themselves or their way home. The staff at the GTPs will assist in reuniting them with their caregivers.
- These are places that also serve as resource centres to provide useful information and resources on dementia, bridging them to relevant services.
- You can find out the list of GTPs in the insert or at <http://tiny.cc/dementiafriendly>

Technology

- We have developed a **Dementia Friends mobile application** to provide timely access to resources, useful information and events. Caregivers can post cases of their loved ones who lost their way and the Dementia Friends app will receive push notifications to help keep a lookout.
- You can support the persons living with dementia and their caregivers by downloading the mobile application here.

Infrastructure

- We can enhance our physical environment to make it accessible and safe for persons living with dementia.

- Examples include converting steps to small ramps, railing installations, clearer signages with larger texts, and so on.

HOW CAN YOU PLAY A PART?

	As an individual	As an organisation
I KNOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Download the Dementia Friends mobile application ✓ Know the signs and symptoms of dementia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Encourage your staff to download the Dementia Friends mobile application ✓ Hold dementia awareness workshops for your staff, especially the frontline staff
I CAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be familiar with the KIND and CARE communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be respectful, understanding & helpful towards persons living with dementia and their caregivers ✓ Provide resources by being a Go-To Point
I WANT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Volunteer at any organisation serving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Set up a support group for working

	As an individual	As an organisation
	<p>persons living with dementia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Keep a look out for persons living with dementia in your community 	<p>caregivers in your organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Adopt seniors with dementia as a CSR cause

If you would like to organise a 1-hour dementia awareness talk at your workplace, school or any other community space, you may contact careinmind@aic.sg.

Download the Dementia Friends Mobile App

Scan QR Code



<http://tiny.cc/dfandroid>



Scan QR Code



<http://tiny.cc/dfios>



Assisting Persons Living with Dementia in Public

Be **KIND** when you come across a person with dementia.

K EEP a lookout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For persons who show the ABCD signs and other symptoms of dementia
I NTERACT with patience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be patient and ask, "Can I help?" • Talk and communicate slowly, with CARE*
N OTICE the persons' needs and offer help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the person appears lost, ask for the next-of-kin's whereabouts or contact number • Look for identification with next-of-kin's details
D IAL for help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call the next-of-kin • In the event of emergency, call the police at 999

It is important that you communicate with ***CARE** to persons living with dementia.

C LEAR and simple when talking to persons living with dementia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak clearly at a slower pace • Maintain a calm and comforting tone • Use short and simple sentences
A CKNOWLEDGE his/her concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smile • Maintain eye contact • Put the person at ease • Be attentive when listening to the person • Prepare to spend more time with the person
R ESPECTFUL and reassuring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring the person to a quiet location • Give the person time to think and respond

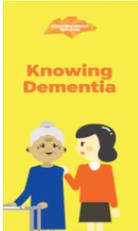
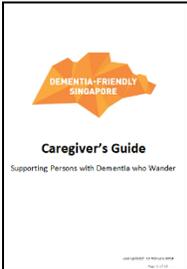
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a friendly and caring tone • Give the person plenty of encouragement
<p>ENGAGE to provide comfort and build trust</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a comforting presence when talking to the person • Build a trusting relationship with the person <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduce yourself ○ Assure the person you are there to help him or her • Ask simple questions to help him or her regain self-awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Who did you come with?” ○ “Where are you going?” ○ “What would you like me to do?” ○ “How would you like me to help you?” ○ “Do you want us to give ____ a call?”

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

You can find resources on dementia from the **Singapore Silver Pages**

<https://www.silverpages.sg/resource-library/Brochures>.

Here are a few examples

	<p>Knowing Dementia</p> <p>Briefly describes signs and symptoms of dementia and provides tips on communication and self – care.</p>
	<p>Caregivers Guide – Supporting Persons Living with Dementia who Wander</p> <p>A guide providing advice on how to how your loved one with dementia can wander safely and what to do if your loved one lost his/her way home</p>



Food for Thought - Eat Well, Live Well, Think Well

This is a set of recipe cards for healthy recipes

Forget Us Not is an initiative that strives to foster a kampong spirit for persons living with dementia to lead normal and dignified lives in the community

<https://www.forgetusnot.sg/>

Dementia Guide by the National Healthcare Service in the UK offers information for people living with dementia and their caregivers.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia/>

Information about Dementia in General

<https://www.alz.org/>

Well-being of the Singapore Elderly (WiSE) is a study that aims to establish the prevalence and risk factors of dementia in Singapore among the elderly resident population (aged 60 years and above).

<https://www.imh.com.sg/research/page.aspx?id=342>