

Dementia

Improving Care for Family Members

More than 5 million Americans have some type of dementia. Alzheimer's disease is one of many types of dementia. If a person has dementia, they have problems in at least two areas that affect their daily life. They may have trouble remembering and communicating, or other types of problems that involve thinking and carrying out daily activities.

Accurate Diagnosis

Getting an accurate diagnosis is important because:

- Not everyone who appears to have dementia actually does. Some conditions like depression, delirium, alcohol or drug misuse, and brain tumors can resemble dementia.
- The effects of certain drugs can resemble dementia.
- Symptoms vary by type of dementia. Your family member may experience changes in memory, thinking, personality, behavior, language, or movement.
- Dementia can cause your family member to have difficulty with managing other diseases, like diabetes.
- A few causes of dementia may be reversible.

Caring for Your Family Member

Over time, people with dementia will lose their ability to be independent and will need help with all basic activities like bathing, eating, and using the toilet. As time goes on, you and others in your family may experience more stress or depression. You may also have financial worries.

The demands of caring for your family member with dementia may become more than you can manage by yourself. You may have to rely on family members, volunteers, paid caregivers in the home and community, or nursing homes.

Getting Help with Understanding Dementia:

Learn more about dementia and how to recognize signs of possible dementia in a family member at: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/what-dementia>.

Find useful resources at: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/topics/dementia>

Educate yourself about managing dementia symptoms, such as wandering away from home. The National Alzheimer's Call Center offers advice 24 hours/7 days a week to people who have questions and need advice about dementia at 1-800-272-3900.

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Visit the [Eldercare Locator](#) or call 1-800-677-1116 to find out what dementia care services are available near you.

Take Steps to Improve Your Family Member's Dementia Care

- Find health and long-term care providers who communicate effectively with you and your family.
- Arrange for your family member to have a timely, accurate diagnosis to rule out reversible causes of dementia or conditions that resemble it.
- Find available dementia care services through Medicare, Medicaid, or the National Family Caregiver Support Program. Medicare likely will cover health care services, such as diagnosis and medical treatment of dementia.
- Find out what dementia care services are available in your community and if your family member is eligible for financial assistance. Visit the [Eldercare Locator](#) or call 1-800-677-1116.
- [Find out if your community is dementia-friendly](#). Some communities are learning about the disease and providing assistance to families facing dementia as they use local services.