

Dementia

Resources and support to help you live well

Finding out about dementia

Finding out that you or a family member may have dementia can be overwhelming. You might have a lot of questions. There is a lot to learn but help is available. Your local doctor (GP) can help you understand what may happen next, and how to find the information and help that you, your family, or friends may need.

This information sheet outlines where to find the services and supports you may need now and in the future.

Call a national help line



The **National Dementia Helpline** provides information and advice, emotional support and guidance, and will connect you to support services and programs.

1800 100 500 free call
24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Dementia Support Australia

The **Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service** is a national advisory service for families and carers of people with dementia. The service provides confidential advice, assessment, intervention, education and specialised support.

1800 699 799 free call
24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Find services using the local Dementia Directory



You can now find a range of local services in the dementia directory, such as:

- Information and resources
- Support groups
- Respite services
- Cognitive, Dementia and Memory Services (CDAMS)
- Health professionals (such as dietitians, exercise physiologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, counsellors)

Visit: DementiaDirectory.org.au

This directory includes services not listed in My Aged Care or Dementia Australia services lists.



Do you need help to access the links in this information sheet?
Call 1800 100 500 or ask your doctor.

This collaborative project is funded by the Australian Government to support better access to dementia care in our community. This information sheet has been developed using content from The Dementia Guide by Dementia Australia and in consultation with people living with dementia, carers and health professionals.

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What to expect

1. Visiting your doctor

Your local doctor (GP) will ask you questions about the changes you or others may have noticed, your lifestyle, family history and other medical history.

They may do a physical assessment and ask you to complete some tests that assess your memory and thinking.

The assessment may take place over multiple appointments. After the assessment, they may refer you to see a number of other health professionals for more tests.

If you can, take another person with you to your appointments. They can support you and help you remember important information.

Preparing for your visit

- Book a long appointment
- Take a list of your medications
- Write down changes you have noticed (forgetting recent events, confusion, changes to your personality) and any concerns you, your family or friends have
- Ask the doctor to write down the next steps.

Questions to ask your doctor

- Is there information I can take away?

2. Tests and referral to specialists as needed

If your local doctor thinks you might have dementia, they can refer you to a specialist doctor such as a neurologist or geriatrician, or a Cognitive, Dementia and Memory Service (CDAMS).

They will check for other possible causes for the changes you have noticed, and may refer you for more tests such as:

- Blood, urine
- Scans to check your brain
- Cognitive and neuropsychological tests to take a deeper look at your memory, attention, thinking and problem solving
- An assessment by a psychiatrist to check for other conditions and to manage symptoms that can occur alongside dementia.

You may need multiple appointments with your specialists before you receive a diagnosis.

Questions to ask your doctor

- Do I need to fast before any of these tests?
- How much will the specialists cost?
- Can I access financial support for specialists?
- What other specialists will be involved?
- Is there information I can take home with me?

The dementia journey



3. Initial management options

If you have been told you have dementia, there are some things you can do that may help to slow the progression:

- Eat a healthy diet
- Be physically active
- Be socially connected
- Quit smoking
- Limit or avoid alcohol and other drugs

Certain medications can reduce some symptoms and the progression of dementia too. How well they work depends on your type of dementia.

There are health professionals who can help you to make healthy lifestyle changes (for example dietitians and exercise physiologists) and support your independence (for example, occupational therapists and physiotherapists). Others can help you with your mood and mental health (counsellors, psychologists).

Local support groups can help you, your friends and family to connect with others and learn how to live with dementia. For more information, ask your local doctor (GP), or visit DementiaDirectory.org.au

4. Ongoing management and support networks

Having regular check-ups with your doctor will help to ensure your overall health is being taken care of. You can also talk to your doctor if you or your carer have any questions about your dementia or need any support, especially if you or your carer have noticed any changes.

Your doctor can help you and your carer to find the right support for you. This includes access to social supports, home help, other health professionals (such as counsellors, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech pathologists, dietitians) and respite services.

They can also help you with Advance Care Planning, something that is recommended for everyone.

It is also important for your carer to have regular check-ups with their doctor (at least yearly), so their health and wellbeing is taken care of.

Questions to ask your doctor



- What type of dementia do I have?
- Can I still drive? Can I still work?
- How might dementia affect me over time?
- Are there any medications that can help me?
- Who can help me to make lifestyle changes?
- Are there other treatments I could try?
- Where can I find reliable information?
- Is there information I can take home with me?

Questions to ask your doctor



- How often should I have regular check-ups/reviews and who should I see?
- Do I need to bring a carer or support person to the check-ups?
- What can I do to plan my future?
- What types of support or services can my carer and I get? What do we need to do to access these?

Tips

1. If you can, take another person with you to your appointments, this can be a family member, carer or friend.
2. If you need an interpreter, or to access the National Relay Service, let the receptionist know when you book your doctor's appointment.
3. If you can, write down or have the doctor write down what you need to do next.
4. Ask the health provider or doctor to speak to you directly, not just the person you have attended the appointment with.
5. Ask your health provider or doctor to book a longer appointment if you need to discuss a number of things.
6. Download the [Dementia Australia checklist](#) in Section 10 of The Dementia Guide to help you at each stage of the journey.

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Support services



There are supports and services that can help you. These may include: help around the home, social and daily activities, personal care, respite care, allied health (such as exercise physiologists, dietitians, occupational therapists), transport, and residential aged care.

To help you find the services you need see below:

- **If you are under 65 years old**
contact the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
Visit [ndis.gov.au](https://www.ndis.gov.au) or call:
1800 800 110
8am – 8pm Monday – Friday
- **If you are over 65 years old**
contact My Aged Care.
Visit myagedcare.gov.au or call:
1800 200 422
8am – 8pm Monday – Friday
10am – 2pm Saturday
- **If you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander** aged 50 – 64 years
you can access either NDIS or My Aged Care.



Support for carers

If you support someone with dementia, you can find information, get support and access services in your area and online at **Carer Gateway**.

Visit: carergateway.gov.au
or call: **1800 422 737**



Scan to visit
The Dementia
Guide

[The Dementia Guide](https://dementia.org.au) is available in print or audio. Each section relates to a stage of your dementia journey. Visit dementia.org.au

Information in other languages



Dementia Australia provides a wide range of information, education and support, including information translated into 38 languages. Visit dementia.org.au/languages.

Dementia Support Australia have a range of translated information online. Visit dementia.com.au/resource-hub.

Mindcare has translated information and short videos available in different languages. Visit mindcare.org.au, mindcare.org.au/understanding-dementia/films.

Interpreter and hearing services

If you need an interpreter, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service on **131 450**.



If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment, please call the National Relay Service on **133 677**.



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We will continue to review and update the information as required.
If you would like to provide your feedback, please email
info@healthpathwaysmelbourne.org.au

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