

Dealing with Dementia

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Seeking Help

The [Alzheimer's Society](#) is an invaluable resource of information on the causes of dementia, and what help is out there. They have produced an accessible [factsheet](#) that explains exactly what dementia is, how it can be caused, treated, and the symptoms and long-term effects of it. People who suffer with dementia will have "memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language" and "may become frustrated or irritable, withdrawn, anxious, easily upset or unusually sad".

Who does it Affect and How is it Treated?

According to the society's factsheet, one in 14 people aged 65 and over suffer with some form of dementia (roughly 800,000 people in the UK). Perhaps a more astonishing figure is that 17,000 people in the UK under 65 have developed dementia; even more intriguing is that this is a low estimate. There is also no known certain cause of dementia, although maintaining a healthy lifestyle may reduce your risks.

Most forms of dementia are treatable but have no cure. The [NHS](#) writes that "dementia caused by vitamin and thyroid hormone deficiencies" are curable, as is dementia caused by "brain tumours, excess fluid on the brain (hydrocephalus) or head injury", which may be treated with surgery. Alzheimer's disease, which is not curable and the most common cause of dementia can be helped by medicines "that may prevent symptoms getting worse for a period of time". The NHS site linked above provides some detailed information on treatment and side-effects.

Watching Someone Suffer with Dementia

It is a terrible thing to have dementia, and a terrible thing to watch a loved one endure the process. The Alzheimer's society writes about the role of a carer and a loved one; to help the sufferer keep a "sense of identity and feelings of

self-worth" as they decline. The [society](#) provides case studies and information on looking after a loved one with dementia, including experiencing grief, telling children, maintaining a sexual relationship, and issues that the [LGBT community](#) may face.

To care for a partner of so many years whose capabilities are diminishing must be unimaginably painful. If you suffer from depression or anxiety during this time, it is important that you take care of your health and you talk to your GP. It can be frustrating for both parties, and heartbreaking for everyone involved.

Dealing Financially and Legally

There is a range of benefits that you may be entitled to after you have been diagnosed with some form of dementia. If you are 16-64, you can apply for [Personal Independence Payment](#), or if you are 65 or over then there is the [Attendance Allowance](#). Carers can of course apply for [Carer's Allowance](#) if you are spending at least 35 hours a week looking after someone. The [NHS](#) also has a page detailing how to fund more extensive care if it becomes necessary. It is important that you discuss all these decisions with your doctors, care workers, and local authorities. The [Citizens Advice Bureau](#) is also an incredible resource.

It is important to consider transferring power of attorney to someone for a time when the person suffering with dementia will not be able to make sound financial decisions. This should be discussed with a care worker and a legal professional. There will also come a time when you should consider making a will, and perhaps a living will that dictates what treatment you want to receive if you are unable to make the decision in the future. Further information on this is available on the [How to Make a Will guide](#).

Help at a Difficult Time

When considering care options, it is important that you make the right decision for you. The [Department of](#)

[Health](#) has provided an interactive map detailing the rates and efficiency of diagnosis and care of dementia throughout the towns and counties of England.

Dementia is a particularly cruel evil that robs us slowly of ourselves and our loved ones, but there is a variety of treatments and care assistance that can help you in this difficult time.

