

Australian version

# iSupport For Dementia

Training and support manual  
for carers of people with dementia



## Unit 2. Timely diagnosis of dementia has many benefits

### Why is this learning unit important?

People with dementia can be diagnosed in a timely manner. Timely diagnosis of dementia has many benefits for person living with dementia and for you as the carer.

### How will this learning unit help me?

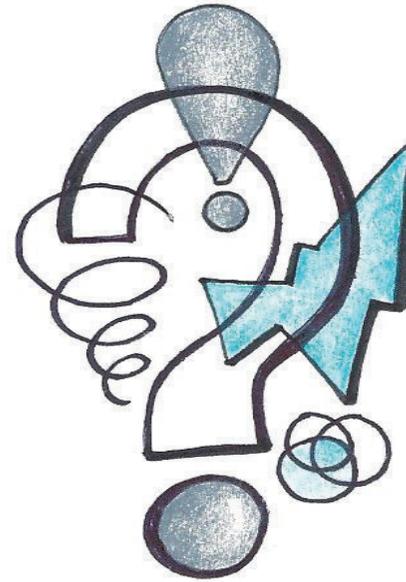
This learning unit will help you to understand the symptoms and stages of dementia and the ways to get help for diagnosis and for care services.



### What happens to people with dementia?

Every person is unique, and dementia affects people differently.

Not only the brain damage, but also other factors, including an individual's personality, life course, general health and functioning and living environment, are all important in determining how dementia affects someone.





## Activity

Here are some common things that may happen to people living with dementia.  
Do you think any occur with the person you care for? Please click on any that apply:

Have trouble remembering things that happened minutes before?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Forgetting recent events</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Repeating questions</i>
Find it difficult to perform daily activities?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Money management</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Shopping</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Preparing dinner</i>
Struggle to identify the time or place as they did before?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Forgetting the date and time of appointments</i>
Communicate differently than they did before?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Difficulty expressing oneself</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Difficulty finding the right words</i>
Misplace things?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Not finding common objects, such as keys</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Suspecting things are stolen</i>
Withdraw socially?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Showing decline in social activity</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Lacking urge to do something</i>
Show changes in feelings or personality?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Having a lot of ups and downs</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Becoming more anxious than before</i>

## What happens to people with dementia?



So, you think the following occur with the person living with dementia:

Have trouble remembering things that happened minutes before?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Forgetting recent events</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Repeating questions</i>
Find it difficult to perform daily activities?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Money management</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Shopping</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Preparing dinner</i>
Can't identify the time or place as they did before?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Forgetting the date and time of appointments</i>
Communicate differently than the person with dementia did before?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Difficulty expressing oneself</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Difficulty finding the right words</i>
Misplace things?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Not finding common objects, such as keys</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Suspecting things are stolen</i>
Withdraw socially?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Showing decline in social activity</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Lacking urge to do something</i>
Show changes in feelings or personality?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Having a lot of ups and downs</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Becoming more anxious than before</i>

## Where can I get help?



### Step 1: See a general practitioner.

If you think that the person living with dementia may have dementia, a good first step is to make sure the person living with dementia sees the general practitioner (or GP). The GP will take a detailed history of the person living with dementia 's health, do a physical examination and question how [Name] 's brain is functioning.

It is important to rule out whether the person living with dementia 's memory problems are caused by other treatable conditions like depression, urinary infection, medication side effects, vitamin deficiency or other brain problems.

It is important to sort out whether the memory problems of the person living with dementia are really part of dementia or are part of something else. Only a medical doctor can do this, not this program.

### Check your understanding



*What is the first step if you think the person you care for has dementia?*

Call a friend or relative.

- TRUE
- FALSE

Use iSupport alone for help.

- TRUE
- FALSE

Call the general practitioner (GP) and make an appointment.

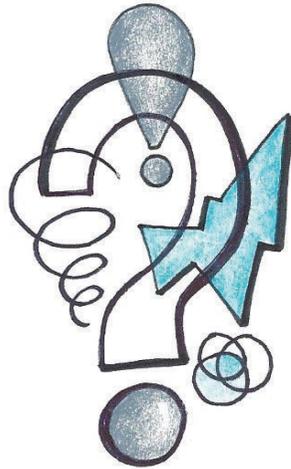
- TRUE
- FALSE

The person has been to a medical doctor already and has been diagnosed with dementia.

- TRUE
- FALSE



## ANSWERS - Timely diagnosis of dementia has many benefits



## Tip

To learn more about stages of dementia, click here:  
[https://www.dementia.org.au/files/helpsheets/Helpsheet-AboutDementia14-ProgressionOfAlzheimersDisease\\_english.pdf](https://www.dementia.org.au/files/helpsheets/Helpsheet-AboutDementia14-ProgressionOfAlzheimersDisease_english.pdf)

## Check your understanding



*What is the first step if you think that the person you care for has dementia?*

- ✗ **Call a friend or relative**  
While friends and family can offer support, this cannot replace a medical exam given by a certified medical doctor.
- ✗ **Use iSupport alone for help**  
While this manual provides information and support, it cannot replace a medical exam given by a certified medical doctor.
- ✓ **Call a medical doctor's office and make an appointment**  
This is the best first step if you have not done so already.
- ✓ **The person has been to a medical doctor already and has been diagnosed with dementia**  
You have already completed the first important step.

## Step 2: Reach out for help.

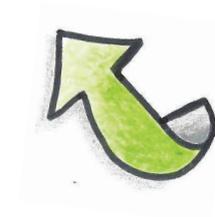
The diagnosis of dementia enables the person to receive Australian Government funded aged care and dementia care services. It is important to realise that you, alone, are not going to be able to provide all the care the person living with dementia needs, especially when things become more complex overtime. So, we encourage you to reach out to family members, friends and professional organisations or services for help.

In Australia, there are services available that offer education and care support including respite care. For assistance to live at home or care for someone in their home, please refer to [www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au) or call My Aged Care on 1800 200 422 Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 10am to 2pm. All home care packages are delivered on a Consumer Directed Care (CDC) basis. This means you (and the person you care for) have more choice and control over what services are delivered and where and when they are delivered.

For more specific information, please go to 'Learning module 6: My engagement in consumer directed care'.

Please also contact Dementia Australia in your state for the information, support and care that is available in your area and could be of benefit for the person living with dementia and you.

Dementia Australia can provide details of local supports and resources - Contact the National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500 or <https://www.dementia.org.au/>



### Step 3: Understand support for carers. Being a carer

The diagnosis of dementia also enables you as a carer to be formally recognised as a carer and receive support. You may look after the person for years. It is very important that you look after yourself as well. There are many free care services for carers funded by the Australian Government that may be suitable for you. Please contact Dementia Australia (Phone: 1800 100 500 or <https://www.dementia.org.au/> ) and/or Carers Australia (Phone: 1800 422 737 or [www.carersaustralia.com](http://www.carersaustralia.com) ) to find out about support available.



### Step 4: Understand your rights as a carer. Legal considerations of being a carer

The Australian Government has created an Act to increase recognition and awareness of carers. Most states and territories also have legislation that sets out your rights as a carer.

It's important to know your legal rights when you are an unpaid carer which include:

- being recognised by health providers as a contributor to the health of the person being cared for
- being heard and treated with respect
- using services to support the person living with dementia without discrimination
- being able to comment on services provided to the person being cared for
- acting in the best interests of the person being cared for.

For more details regarding 'Legal considerations of being a carer', please go to 'Module 6 Learning Unit: Carer support'.



## Check your understanding



*Carers of people with dementia need to apply for carer support groups from My Aged Care.*

- TRUE
- FALSE

## Check your understanding



*Carers of people with dementia need to apply for carer support groups from My Aged Care.*

- × False: This is the incorrect answer.

The right answer is that carers of people with dementia need to apply for carer support groups from Dementia Australia and/or Carers Australia.



### Keep in Mind



- As a first step for dementia diagnosis, it is important to see a general practitioner or GP.
- It is important that you take care of yourself.
- The iSupport program is to support you as a caregiver.
- There are services and support available to help you and the person living with dementia.



### RELATED LEARNING UNITS

- Module 1 Unit 1 Introduction to dementia
- Module 1 Unit 3 Using memory aids in your care activities
- Module 1 Unit 4 How to respond to repetitive behaviour
- Module 2 Unit 1 The journey together
- Module 3 Unit 3 Thinking differently
- Module 4 Unit 5 An enjoyable day
- Module 5 Unit 1 Introduction to person-centred approach
- Module 6 Unit 1 Introduction to consumer-directed care

### Tip

For additional care and support for the person living with dementia and you, see Dementia Australia in your state, click here. <https://www.dementia.org.au/> or call National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500.



You finished this unit, well done!