



## Worried about your memory?

Find out more about memory problems and what to do next.



**DEMENTIA  
CONNECT**

# Worried about memory problems?

Everybody forgets things from time to time. But if you are noticing problems with your memory, or the memory of someone close to you, it's important to speak to a GP.

Memory problems do not always mean dementia. They can also be a sign of other conditions including depression, infections and vitamin deficiencies, so it is important to speak to a GP about them. It may not be anything to worry about, but it's always better to get these things checked out.

Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, we have all had less social contact. You or your family and friends may have only recently noticed changes in your own or someone else's memory because you've not been able to spend as much time with them. These memory problems may have been going on for some time.

If you, or someone close to you is diagnosed with dementia, we are here for you. Our support service Dementia Connect will connect you to a whole range of personalised support; by phone, online and face to face when safe to do so. You can get in touch by:

**T: 0333 150 3456**

**W: [alzheimers.org.uk/support](https://alzheimers.org.uk/support)**

**E: [dementia.connect@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:dementia.connect@alzheimers.org.uk)**

We have joined forces with Santander UK and as part of our partnership they are helping us reach more people across the country who are worried about their own or someone else's memory, so they can get the support they need.

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# How can I tell if memory problems are a sign of something serious?

Forgetting why you went upstairs. Failing to put a name to the face of a celebrity. And the feeling that a word is ‘on the tip of your tongue’. We’ve all done it – and most of the time, small memory slips aren’t serious. Many people find that their memory becomes less reliable as they get older.

However, if your memory or the memory of someone close to you is getting noticeably worse, or affecting everyday life, it should be checked out by a GP as it may be a sign of a medical condition.

## Memory loss can also be an early sign of dementia. This is especially true if you:

- struggle to remember recent events, although you can easily recall things from longer ago
- find it hard to follow conversations or programmes on TV
- forget the names of close friends or everyday objects
- struggle to recall things you have heard, seen or read recently
- regularly lose the thread of what you are saying
- find yourself putting objects in unusual places – such as your keys in the fridge
- feel confused, even in a familiar place, or get lost on familiar journeys
- find that people start to notice or comment on your memory loss.



## What should I do next?

If you're worried about your memory, talk to your GP or to us. It is important to find out the reason for the problems as there may be treatment or support available that can help.

Your GP will talk to you (and anyone with you) about your concerns and arrange for further investigation if necessary. Each GP is different, but you can call to find out if they can see you in person, or they may prefer to do a telephone or video call assessment.

You may be referred to a local memory clinic or hospital specialist where further assessments will take place so you can get a diagnosis.

If you're concerned about the memory of someone close to you, encourage them to talk to their GP. You could start the conversation by gently asking if they've been feeling any different from usual or are struggling with anything. Support them to make the appointment with the GP and ask if they'd like you to go with them, or to be there when they call.

If you want to talk to us about the memory problems you are, or someone close to you is, experiencing call our Dementia Connect support line **0333 150 3456** or email [dementia.connect@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:dementia.connect@alzheimers.org.uk)



## Five facts about the condition

# 1

The word 'dementia' describes a set of symptoms that may include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language, and often changes in mood, perception or behaviour.

# 2

Dementia is caused when the brain is damaged by diseases such as Alzheimer's disease or a series of strokes. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia.

# 3

Dementia is more common in people over 65, but it can affect younger people too.

# 4

There are factors that increase your risk of getting dementia, but it is not usually possible to say for sure, why a particular person has developed dementia.

# 5

Most instances of dementia are not inherited but there are exceptions. These exceptions tend to be rarer forms of dementia or cases where someone develops the condition very young – in their 50s.



## What if it is dementia?

Everyone's experience of a diagnosis of dementia is different.

Sadness, fear and a sense of loss or disbelief are all common reactions. It may sound strange, but some people also feel relief, from having an explanation for the changes they have been experiencing. Once you have a diagnosis, you can deal with it and do something about it. On the next page you can read about one person's experience.

### What happens next?

There is no known cure for dementia, but your doctor may prescribe drugs that can lessen symptoms for a while. Dementia can be treated with or without drugs, by looking after other medical conditions and making changes to your lifestyle. With a combination of these, it is possible to live well with dementia for many years.

It's important to know that you aren't alone. About 850,000 people in the UK have dementia and there is support available for you and your family.

The non-drug treatments that are available, and how to be referred for them, can vary depending where you live. Your GP or memory service should give you details of these, or you can talk to us.

If you or someone close to you receives a dementia diagnosis, we are here for you. Whether it's advice on what to do about work or planning for the future, or help with understanding dementia or just someone to talk to when things get tough, we can help.





## **Vesna tells us about her experience of memory loss and diagnosis.**

'I was a social worker and had always taken pride in my work. When my memory problems started, I didn't want to bring attention to them. I struggled on for two years, but it got to a point where I was missing appointments and couldn't retain information. If I interviewed someone, as soon as I'd finished the interview, I'd forget what they had said.

I would meet friends of my daughter's in the street and not be able to remember them at all. I realised I had to speak to my doctor to say, 'I'm having problems remembering things.'

My sister came with me to my memory assessment and to my appointment when I received my vascular dementia diagnosis. It was comforting to have her there with me, but I still felt confused. I had never heard of vascular dementia and I didn't know what to do next.

My doctor told me that I should go off and live my life, so I booked a trip to Australia. Something I'd always wanted to do. Over time I have come to understand my dementia and how to manage it. I've found support in a local art group where I paint and write poetry.

I'd advise anyone struggling with memory problems to overcome their embarrassment and speak to their doctor. And to find out about organisations that can support you early on.

I don't let my dementia define me. You can find happiness in how you are. That doesn't rely on memory – you're more than your memory.'

# Talk to us

If you're worried about your own memory or someone else's, then contact your GP or talk to us today. Whatever your questions or concerns, we're here for you.

Call our Dementia Connect support line

**0333 150 3456**

Support line opening hours:

Monday to Wednesday 9am – 8pm

Thursday and Friday 9am – 5pm

Saturday and Sunday 10am – 4pm

W: [alzheimers.org.uk/support](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/support)

E: [dementia.connect@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:dementia.connect@alzheimers.org.uk)

Alzheimer's Society operates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Registered charity No. 296645

Publication code 256

We have been working with Santander to produce a guide to help people affected by dementia remain financially included and be financially independent for longer. It can be downloaded from:  
[alzheimers.org.uk/memoryproblems](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/memoryproblems)

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