



WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE SHOWS SIGNS OF MEMORY LOSS



SUNDARA
SENIOR LIVING



Mom and I typically giggle over our shared moments of forgetfulness, like the day she was trying to find her glasses and she was already wearing them.

But when I am in my parent's home, I see obvious red flags that her difficulties with everyday circumstances are much more serious than a normal case of forgetfulness.

I cannot help but feel alarmed.

Is she deteriorating and does she need help?

If you are seeing signs of dementia, you may be unsure of what to do next. **This brochure will help you:**

1. Learn all the early signs of dementia/Alzheimers
2. Have the conversation with your loved one
3. Prepare for a diagnosis
4. Explore options for long-term care



Signs & Symptoms of Dementia & Alzheimer's

Dementia is an overall term for a progressive brain disease, the most common type is known as Alzheimer's, but there are many different types of dementia with varying causes. Here are some common signs and symptoms:

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

Struggling with communication may seem common, but this is more than a forgotten word. The challenges from mild cognitive impairment can impact daily life – it is the inability to connect the right words to your thoughts, making it harder to participate in conversations.

CONFUSION

Randomly forgetting where you are and how you got to that location is very common and typically can be one type of confusion that is experienced.

MOOD AND BEHAVIOR ISSUES

There can be unexplained mood swings, anger, agitation or even depression and suspicion.

CONCENTRATION AND FOCUS DECLINE

As the brain's health deteriorates, so does the ability to concentrate and focus, which can be a classic early sign of changes. As the disease progresses, this problem increasingly impacts communication as well as ability to recall or even learn new information.





LOSS OF INTEREST

Suddenly what you love to do no longer interests you, which may be a result of the difficulty in trying to perform what used to be an easy task. This may lead to feelings of depression and apathy, which can result in withdrawing from activities of daily life.

NORMAL IS NO LONGER NORMAL

With early-onset Alzheimer's, nothing seems normal. It becomes a struggle to maintain one's daily life, familiar places become less recognizable and normal daily tasks are more challenging.

MEMORY LOSS

Memory loss is often the most common sign that one will encounter – forgetting the day of the week, what was eaten for a meal, how to play a game or events such as attending a luncheon or party. As the disease damages the brain, the ability to recall all information continues to decline, and increasing assistance is needed, for daily activities and even to manage normal body functions.



Have The Conversation

Set a date/time

You don't want this conversation to be spur of the moment when both parties may feel overwhelmed, tired or be rushed. Set a date and time when you will both be calm and relaxed.

Prepare what you will say in advance

Make sure you go into the conversation with a clear agenda, including points as to why you feel like you need to talk about this, and why you care about them.

Practice Empathy

There is a big chance that there will be an angry reaction. Don't use words that may come across as critical and be careful of your body language. If your loved one becomes defensive it may be the end of the conversation.

Be Clear

Talk to them about specific instances of things that have happened that have led you to believe there may be a memory problem. But be prepared to pull out of the conversation if they deny what is going on.

Delay the conversation

If the convo starts to turn defensive, or angry it may be best to stop and try again another day. You may need to try this multiple times before you can get someone to agree to be seen by a doctor.



Preparing for the first doctor's visit can be intimidating. **The best course of action is typically to schedule a visit with their Primary Care doctor.**

Make a list of instances of memory loss events that you would like to share with them. Also, make sure you understand or have on hand their medical history.

There isn't a single core test to determine if someone has dementia.

Doctors carefully assess and diagnose diseases and other factors that produce the symptoms of dementia, then diagnose dementia with a high degree of certainty.

Common tests for dementia include:

- Cognitive and neuropsychological tests – assess memory, problem-solving, language skills, math skills, and other abilities related to mental functioning
- Laboratory tests of blood and other fluids – determine levels of various chemicals, hormones, and vitamins
- Brain scans – identify strokes, tumors, and changes in the brain's structure and function
- Psychiatric evaluations – helps determine if depression or another mental health condition is causing or contributing to symptoms
- Genetic tests – helps determine if a person is at risk for dementia

Treatment of dementia varies based on its cause. In many cases, **there is no drug or treatment that slows or stops its progression.** Drug treatments may temporarily improve symptoms. Many of the same medications that are prescribed to treat Alzheimer's are among the drugs prescribed to assist with symptoms of certain types of dementia.



Explore options for long-term care

When dealing with cognitive impairments, such as Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, advanced specialized care is critical. It is essential to your loved one's quality of life and safety while providing peace of mind to the family. It is a comfortable, safe and secure environment to provide the level of care that your loved one needs while providing support to the family.

When families first come in to Sundara the question we hear most often is, "When Will it be Time for Memory Care?" The short answer is when the person becomes a danger to themselves or others. However because dementia is a progressive disease there can be signs that you can watch for to help you and your family determine when the right time for long-term care is, before a crisis occurs.

Decide if it is time

- Has your parent/loved one left the home and become lost?
- Is your parent/loved one safe being alone at home?
- Would your parent/loved one answer a phone call or the door unable to discern if the person was a scammer
- Would your parent/loved one know not to give personal information to callers on the phone?
- Does your parent/loved one mix-up certain objects or tasks? Meaning, have you found the iron in the freezer, using ointment for toothpaste, waking up from an afternoon nap thinking its morning, or leaves the stove on?
- Does your parent/loved one have the ability to keep up correctly with finances?



Questions to Narrow down your choices

- How is a specialized care “unit” different from a memory care facility?
- What types of staff certifications or training are mandatory? Who is monitoring this?
- What are the types of personal care provided?
- What will my loved one be doing all day?
- What activities are available that may help brain health? (Physical exercise, reminiscence therapy, puzzles)
- Do you provide a package pricing? What does that include or exclude?
- Is medical assistance available on site?
- How far is the hospital?
- Walk me through what happens if my loved one has an emergency.
- Can I visit when I want?
- What types of meals are provided? Do they accommodate special diets eg. diabetic or vegan diets?
- How often are the housekeeping and laundry services provided?
- How do you manage a changing cognitive level?
- Will my loved one feel lonely?
- How do you provide that family, home comfort?
- What is done to ensure my loved one’s safety?
- Does the facility offer special care units? (Diabetic care, mobility therapy, wandering, physical aggressiveness)
- What is the discharge policy?



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