

Gradually the person can begin to lose the ability to do everyday tasks. Eventually, they may not be able to do even basic tasks like eating, dressing and going to the toilet.

Their personality may change but the person is still there beneath the illness.

People can live with dementia for many years - with changing needs.

There are about 90,000 people with dementia in Scotland today. This figure is likely to double within a generation. It will probably touch all of our lives at some point.

You may be able to reduce your risk of developing dementia in later life by:

- Eating healthily
- Staying mentally active
- Keeping physically active
- Maintaining your social networks



Originally compiled  
by Nicky Thomson, Good  
Morning Project Ltd and the North  
Dementia Forum, 2009

## Information and support

Our confidential Dementia Helpline, on Freephone 0808 808 3000 offers 24 hour information and emotional support. Call anytime to talk things over, find out about local services or for our free information pack.

**24 HOUR**

Dementia  **Alzheimer Scotland**  
Action on Dementia

# Helpline

Freephone 0808 808 3000  
Email [helpline@alzscot.org](mailto:helpline@alzscot.org)

**Alzheimer Scotland**  
160 Dundee Street, Edinburgh, EH11 1DQ

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Link with us on Facebook

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**[www.alzscot.org](http://www.alzscot.org)**

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Communicating  
with someone who  
has dementia:

# 12 Helpful Hints

Making sure nobody faces dementia alone.

1. Be calm and patient.
2. Face the person, speak clearly and slowly.
3. Make sure that you have their attention by gently touching their arm and saying their name.
4. Use short, simple sentences and say exactly what you mean.
5. Try to get one idea across at a time.
6. Allow plenty of time for the person to take in what you say and to reply.
7. Try not to confuse or embarrass the person by correcting them bluntly.
8. Use questions which ask for a simple answer.
9. Don't ask questions which test their memory, eg 'who am I?' or 'what did you do yesterday?'
10. Talk about familiar people, places and ideas.
11. Use the names of the people you are talking about instead of 'he' or 'she'. It will remind the person of who you are talking about.
12. Use facial expressions and hand gestures to make yourself understood.

# 12 Helpful Hints

## What can someone with dementia feel?

Imagine if you were to lose the ability to say the right word or understand what was being said, eg. when on holiday in a foreign country where you don't speak the language.

You may feel frustrated, angry and look for help, perhaps someone to interpret for you.

You might respond by not speaking at all and withdrawing into yourself or avoiding situations where you have to communicate with people.

## A person with dementia may also:

- Feel under pressure because they can't cope as well as they used to.
- Feel that their independence and privacy are being taken away.
- Think that they are being judged for making a mistake.
- Be frightened by too much noise, too many people or a change to their routine.
- May already have poor hearing and eyesight which can be made worse by their dementia.

Dementia is an illness of the brain. When someone has dementia, brain cells are damaged and die faster than normal. The brain does not work as well as it should.

Often the illness affects memory first. The person may become confused about where they are, what day it is and who people are.

Someone with dementia will often repeat actions and questions.

## Actions speak louder than words!

A smile, touch or gesture can be just as important in getting the message across and showing that you care.

Sometimes holding the person's hand when you talk can be very reassuring.

