Call the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500
6 Support and services for people with dementia

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Key points: Support and services

There is a wide range of social care and support services that exist to help people with dementia live as well as possible, throughout the various stages of the illness. While some services are free, you may have to contribute to the costs of others, depending on your income and savings.

The key point of contact for people aged over 65 to access dementia services is My Aged Care. Dementia Australia, the Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service (DBMAS), local councils, GPs and private care agencies can also offer valuable support.
Services for people with dementia have often been developed around the needs of older people, and in some cases are unavailable to people diagnosed with dementia when they are below the age of 65. Even where services are available to people with younger onset dementia, they may not necessarily be appropriate. For that reason, Dementia Australia provides tailored advice and information through its Younger Onset Dementia Key Worker Program. You may also be eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Full, up-to-date details of the services available for people living with dementia, their families and carers can be found by contacting the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500.
Where to go for support

A diagnosis of dementia can be daunting and raises many questions about the future. Asking for help can feel difficult, particularly if you have always been independent. You might not feel like you need it straightaway, but it can be useful and comforting to know about the wide range of information and support available.

Most people will know how to contact their doctor for healthcare. But you might not know as much about the social care and support services offered in your local area. Some services are free, but you may have to contribute to the costs of others, depending on your income and savings.

Services for people with dementia over 65 years of age

The main sources of information and support for people living with dementia who are aged over 65 are My Aged Care, Dementia Australia, local Councils, the Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service, your GP and some private agencies.

My Aged Care

My Aged Care is the main entry point to the aged care system in Australia. It was established by the Australian government to help people navigate the aged care system and is designed to give people more choice, control and easier access to a full range of aged care services.

Through its website and contact centre, My Aged Care can provide information on aged care for yourself, a family member, friend or someone you are caring for.

The service provides information and advice on the different types of aged care services available, your eligibility and the associated costs. It helps you understand your aged care needs, provides information on the local services available that will meet those needs, and allows you to select your own service provider.
Determining the appropriate next steps might involve referring you for a home support assessment with the Regional Assessment Service, or a comprehensive assessment with an Aged Care Assessment Service.

To find out more about My Aged Care, visit myagedcare.gov.au or call 1800 200 422.

**Dementia Australia**

Dementia Australia is the charity representing people, of all ages, living with all forms of dementia, their families and carers. As the peak body, they provide specialised dementia information and are the leaders when it comes to education and providing support services.

To contact Dementia Australia, call the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500 or visit dementia.org.au

**Local councils**

Your local council will offer a variety of programs and support services, including:

- senior citizen groups and centres
- Planned Activity Group (PAG) programs – exercise, gardening, crafts, games
- shopping assistance
- meal delivery
- home and garden maintenance
- home and personal care services
- respite care
- community transport
- accessible arts and recreational programs

To find out more about services provided by your local council, visit myagedcare.gov.au
Home Care Packages

A Home Care Package provides a package of services tailored to meet your specific care needs. It can help you stay in your own home as you get older and give you choice and flexibility in the way your care and services are provided to you at home.

The types of services you receive under a Home Care Package will depend on your needs. Your service provider will work with you to identify these needs and your personal goals. They will also work with you to co-design the best ways to deliver those services so you can live a more active and independent life.

The services that can be provided in a Home Care Package include, but are not limited to:

- support services, such as help with washing and ironing, house cleaning, gardening, basic home maintenance, home modifications related to your care needs, and transport to help you with shopping, visiting your doctor or attending social activities
- personal care, such as help with showering or bathing, dressing and mobility
- nursing, allied health and other clinical services, such as hearing and vision services

For more information on eligibility and how to apply for a Home Care Package, visit myagedcare.gov.au/home-help/home-care-packages

General practitioner

Your doctor is a good resource for the ongoing monitoring of your health and treatment of your dementia. They can provide referrals to private and public specialists such as geriatricians, neurologists and psychiatrists.
Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service

Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service is a nationwide service funded by the Australian government. The program provides clinical support to the carers of people living with dementia, where behavioural and psychological symptoms are impacting on the care provided, at home or in an aged care facility.

The organisation works to improve the dementia care capacity of professional and family carers, and service providers. Clinicians conduct individual assessments and care planning to assist carers in their roles and establish links to appropriate support networks.

For more information, visit dbmas.org.au or call 1800 699 799.

Private care agencies

A wide range of private companies offer care and support services at home for people with dementia. Somebody with dementia might pay for a care assistant using their own money, or engage these services using government funding, if they are eligible for a Home Care Package. For more information, see the details on Home Care Packages on page 94.

Services for people with younger onset dementia

If you have been diagnosed with dementia and are under the age of 65, you may have very different interests, and care and support needs from someone diagnosed in their 70s, 80s or 90s.

For example, people with younger onset dementia are more likely to be working (or have a partner who is), have dependent children and possibly dependent parents. They are also likely to have multiple financial commitments, such as a mortgage.

In some cases, services for people with dementia have often been developed around the needs of older people, and sometimes access is restricted to those aged over 65. Even when a service is open to people with younger onset dementia, the type of care and support provided may not always be appropriate or flexible enough to meet individual needs.
However, the number of services suitable for people with younger onset dementia is growing. Your Cognitive Dementia and Memory Service, consultants, doctor, or Dementia Australia can provide information on the support available.

Depending on your geographical location, you may be eligible to receive services through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

If you have been diagnosed with dementia below the age of 65, you will be eligible for support from the National Younger Onset Dementia Key Worker Program through Dementia Australia. The program provides individualised information and support to improve quality of life for people with younger onset dementia.

The best way to access the Younger Onset Dementia Key Worker Program is to call the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500.

In addition, Dementia Australia has a Younger Onset Dementia Online Forum. It provides a place where people with younger onset dementia, their families, carers and friends can share information. This access to peer-to-peer support is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The forum can be accessed at talkdementia.org.au

For more information see our series of Help Sheets on Younger onset dementia. Available at dementia.org.au

Things to consider

- Are there any particular services you think might be able to offer you support?
- Have you considered meeting with other people living with dementia to share and learn from each of your personal experiences?
- Have you contacted Dementia Australia for advice on accessing support services (including peer support programs)?