



Section 2

Understanding your diagnosis

This publication contains information and general advice. It should not substitute personalised advice from a qualified professional.

While we strive to keep content accurate and up-to-date, information can change over time. For updates, please visit dementia.org.au or call the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**.

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dementia.org.au/resources/the-dementia-guide

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Dementia can only be diagnosed with certain medical examinations.

This could involve:

- physical examinations to test sensory, movement, heart and lung function
- blood, urine and spinal fluid tests
- cognitive or neuropsychological tests to assess memory, language, attention and problem-solving
- scans to check brain structure and rule out anomalies
- psychiatric assessment to check for treatable disorders and manage symptoms that can occur alongside dementia.

Your general practitioner will likely refer you to different medical specialists for these examinations.

Recognising your feelings

It is normal to experience a range of emotions after your diagnosis.

You may feel:

- anger
- fear
- loss
- disbelief
- denial
- depression
- anxiety
- isolated
- a sense of relief.

It is important to recognise your emotions. This will help you adjust to your diagnosis.

Try to share your feelings with family and friends.

Writing your thoughts in a journal can be helpful.

You can also get help from:

- support groups for people with dementia
- your doctor or nurse
- trained counsellors.

Learn about support groups, counselling and other assistance following a diagnosis by calling the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**.

Learning more about dementia

Learning about dementia might be daunting or uncomfortable. But understanding the changes you may experience is an important step.

Learning more about dementia can help you:

- adjust to your diagnosis
- talk to your doctor about treatment and support
- identify your priorities and goals for the future
- access support and coping strategies
- make financial and legal plans
- make plans for your care over the coming years.

You do not need to learn everything at once. If you start feeling overwhelmed, give yourself time to get used to the new information.

Dementia Australia provides a range of resources online at dementia.org.au and education programs at dementia.org.au/education

You can also call **1800 100 500** for more information.

Telling people about your diagnosis

Sharing your feelings with family and friends can help you cope with your diagnosis and help them learn how to support you.

As your dementia progresses, the support of people who know and understand you will become increasingly important.

Some people start by sharing their diagnosis with close family and friends. Others choose to share the news with a broader group of people.

The people you tell may have a range of reactions. They may seem angry, afraid or surprised. They

may even seem relieved to have an explanation for your symptoms.

Try to be patient with any of these responses. They might need extra information or time before they become more supportive.

As your dementia progresses, this support will become more important. Some of your relationships might be tested, but others are likely to become stronger.

If you are struggling with talking about your diagnosis and need support to tell other people, you can call the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**.