



Neighbors and Community Members

As awareness of dementia grows, we can take action to create dementia friendly communities. While every part of the community has a unique role in meaningfully supporting people with dementia and their care partners, some actions can be taken by all members of the community. The following guide provides information about dementia, and outlines steps and actions we can all take to ensure our communities are supportive of persons living with dementia.



What is Dementia?

Dementia is a general term for a loss of memory and other thinking abilities that is serious enough to interfere with activities of daily life. Dementia has many causes. Alzheimer's disease, the most common cause of dementia, is a disease of the brain that leads to problems with memory, thinking, and behavior. Alzheimer's and other dementias are not a normal part of aging.

Ready to implement dementia friendly practices?

Follow the steps:

1

Prepare

Recognize signs of dementia and difference from normal aging.

Know local services that help people with dementia and their care partners.

Report suspected abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation.

2

Learn

Educate others in the community about the signs of dementia.

Learn to use dementia friendly communication skills to increase support and reduce stigma.

Raise awareness by involving persons of all ages in dementia education.

3

Respond

Support people with dementia and their care partners and families to help them continue in their roles and develop strengths.

Encourage opportunities for people with dementia and their care partners to connect with others.

Raise awareness, reduce stigma, and promote support in your community and others by spreading dementia friendly principles.

Signs of Dementia¹

- Memory loss that disrupts daily life.
- Challenges in planning or solving problems.
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure.
- Confusion with time or place.
- Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships.
- New problems with words in speaking or writing.
- Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps.
- Decreased or poor judgment.
- Withdrawal from work or social activities.
- Changes in mood or personality.

Interacting with People with Dementia ²

- Slow pace slightly and allow time for person to process and respond.
- Simplify sentences or choices.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Speak clearly and calmly, be patient and understanding; listen.
- Avoid arguing with or embarrassing the person.
- Treat the person with dignity and respect.
- Meet in a quiet place without extra noise distractions.
- Be aware of your body language: smile and make eye contact at eye level.
- Seek to understand person's reality or feelings.
- Apologize and redirect to another environment or subject as needed.

Spread Dementia Friendly Principles

- Partner with advocacy groups, state agencies, and regulators to learn more about, follow and encourage dementia friendly practices.
- Share learning and experiences and spread best practices to promote dementia friendly principles among others

Benefits of Early Detection and Diagnosis

- Brings personal relief from better understanding, knowing diagnosis.
- Maximizes time to make decisions and plan for the future.
- Person can access services and support early on.
- Reduces risks.
- Can prevent or reduce future financial costs.
- Improves clinical outcomes and medical management.

Resources

- Alzheimer's Association, Know the 10 Signs http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_10_signs_of_alzheimers.asp
- Alzheimer's Association – Communicating <https://www.alz.org/care/dementia-communication-tips.asp>