

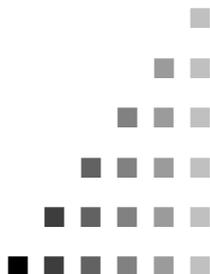
# Patient Information Leaflet

## Alma Partnership

Telephone: 01202 519311 Fax: 01202 548532

E-mail: [admin.alma@dorset.nhs.uk](mailto:admin.alma@dorset.nhs.uk)

[www.almapartnership.co.uk](http://www.almapartnership.co.uk) for practice news and information



# Alzheimer's & Dementia Advice

For further information visit

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

**DEMENTIA** affects about 820,000 people in England and about 15,000 of these people are aged 65 or less. It is not a single illness but a group of symptoms caused by damage to the brain.

The most common cause is called *Alzheimer's Disease*. Another is *Vascular Dementia* which can develop following a stroke, or if there is blood vessel damage that interrupts the supply of blood to your brain. Dementia is not a normal consequence of growing old. As we get older, many of us notice our brain is not as agile and our memory not as sharp as it used to be. It is quite a common observation but it can make us wonder if these memory problems could be an early sign of dementia.

### **THE SYMPTOMS OF DEMENTIA INCLUDE:**

- Memory loss, such as remembering past events much more easily than recent ones.
- Problems thinking or reasoning, or finding it hard to follow conversations or TV programmes.
- Feeling anxious, depressed or angry about memory loss, or feeling confused, even when in a familiar environment.

Dementia is progressive, which means that the symptoms will get worse over time. It can happen to anyone and there is currently no cure, but treatments can slow the progression of the disease.

If it is diagnosed early enough there are lots of things that can be done to help you overcome problems and improve the quality of your life.

### **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO MAKE THE DIAGNOSIS EARLY?**

A diagnosis can help a person get information, advice and support, and enable them and their family to plan for the future. It can also rule out other conditions that might be treatable, such as depression, and other causes of confusion.

### **MEDICATION TO SLOW THE PROGRESS OF THE DISEASE**

Depending on the stage of the condition, medication can be helpful. In many circumstances medication can help to slow the progression of the disease. In addition many people with dementia also suffer from agitation and depression and it is important to address these symptoms, which sometimes is best treated with medication.

## **LIVING WITH DEMENTIA RATHER THAN SUFFERING FROM DEMENTIA**

Dementia and Alzheimer's are words that are feared by many. The aim is to help people to remain independent and continue to enjoy their usual activities.

### **PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

It is really important to allow people to plan for their future and to let your family know what you would like to happen in certain circumstances.

At a stage where you may need help with your affairs, it is important to have a nominated someone to be your '*Lasting Power of Attorney*'. But, if you leave this too long and you lose the capacity to fully understand the decisions, you are making the process more complicated and expensive.

For more information visit Age UK's website: [www.ageuk.org.uk/publications](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/publications), and then click onto Age UK information and factsheets on left hand side. *Information Guide 21 - Powers of Attorney*.

### **ENSURE YOU HAVE WRITTEN A WILL**

Consider producing an Advance Directive (sometimes called a Living Will or Advanced Decisions) which is a written document expressing your wishes about medical treatments you would not wish to have in the future should you lose the capacity to make these decisions. More information is available on the NHS Choices website – [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and then search site for *Advanced Directive*, also Age UK Factsheet 72—[www.ageuk.org.uk/publications](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/publications)

### **HELP AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE**

Often people with dementia and their families feel isolated and do not know where to look for help and support.

The good news is that you are not alone and there is help and support available much of it is about improving the quality of life rather than simply medical care.

**The Alzheimer's Society** is an excellent source of help and advice (website listed below).

### **MEMORY AND SUPPORT ADVISORY SERVICE**

You can be referred to the Memory Support and Advisory Service by your GP or a number of other agencies. Contact: 0300 123 1916 or by email - [dorset@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:dorset@alzheimers.org.uk). More information is on the Alzheimer's Society website (details below).

More information about the process of getting a diagnosis is on the Dorset Healthcare Website (details below).

### **PRACTICAL TIPS**

- Keep a diary and write down things you want to remember
- Pin a weekly timetable to the wall
- Put your keys in an obvious place such as a large bowl in the hall
- Have a daily newspaper delivered to remind you of the date and day
- Put labels on cupboards or drawers
- Place helpful telephone numbers by the phone
- Write reminders to yourself – for example, put a note on the front door to take your keys
- Programme people's names and numbers into your phone
- Install safety devices, such as gas detectors and smoke alarms

### **HELPFUL WEBSITES**

**Alzheimer's society:** [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

**Dorset Healthcare:** [www.dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk](http://www.dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk)

**Dementia UK:** [www.dementiauk.org/information-support](http://www.dementiauk.org/information-support)

**NHS Choices:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Driving and Dementia:** <https://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/disability-health-condition>

**Dementia Advisory Service Dorset:** [www.mylifemycare.com/Memory-loss-and-dementia](http://www.mylifemycare.com/Memory-loss-and-dementia)

*The content provided in this leaflet is for information purposes only.. Information obtained in this leaflet is subject to personal interpretation and can become obsolete, thus accuracy cannot be guaranteed. Please consult your own healthcare provider regarding any medical issues. Last updated Sept 2016*