



For carers, By carers

Going for a diagnosis

Seeking a diagnosis is often brave and challenging, but it may prove the kindest and most empowering thing you can do for the person you care about.

Forgetfulness does not mean someone has dementia; nor is dementia an inevitable part of growing older. Many other conditions, such as infections, depression or the side effects of medicines can cause similar problems.

The earlier a diagnosis of dementia, the sooner you as a carer can start to come to terms with the illness, make plans for the future and access support and services that can help.



What carers would like to share with you

- If you are worried about someone's memory, ask them to book an appointment to see their doctor. Suggest you will accompany them.
- People can and do live well with dementia. There are support groups within Alzheimer Scotland not only for people living with dementia but also for carers.
- Speak to an Alzheimer Scotland Dementia Advisor about any financial benefits or other support that may be available.
- Delaying going for a diagnosis, combined with potential lengthy waits for appointments and results, only adds to anxiety.
- Even when the diagnosis is not the news you want to hear it may confirm what you already suspect, and it will allow you to adjust and plan.
- If you are the next of kin or a key contact make sure the GP and other services have your details and make clear you wish to be alerted prior to appointments.
- It's important to remember that in addition to your existing relationship to the person with dementia you are also now their carer. There is support and services available to you in this role – don't be afraid to ask for help!

Did you know?

- Getting a diagnosis promptly allows early access to support and new helpful drugs.
- The GP may refer on to a memory clinic or a specialist to better understand what has been happening. This may include more detailed testing such as scans or for blood bio markers.
- The Scottish Government has guaranteed at least a year's post diagnostic support for everyone diagnosed with dementia and their carer.

"A diagnosis of dementia is not the news we wanted but it allows us to plan ahead. We don't know what the future holds – but then, who does?"

*“There will never be a best time to suggest
‘Let’s go for a diagnosis’ – but it’s never wrong to seek help.”*

Top Tips for Carers

- Put in place as soon as possible a Power of Attorney and Advance Statement that truly reflects the wishes of the person with dementia – it’s key for future proofing.
- As a carer you have rights protected by legislation.
- If you provide regular care you are entitled to a Carer’s Assessment which will enable Social Services to offer you advice and support.
- Don’t become isolated. Engage with family, friends and neighbours. Explain the situation to help them understand your feelings.
- Keep handy a list of important phone numbers such as for the GP, Social Work and, of course, Alzheimer Scotland.
- Keep a diary of appointments where you record all the support and advice available, and any action taken.
- Technology and apps can help people with dementia to live well and safely and can provide peace of mind for carers.
- Remember that before you were a carer you were the person’s family, friend, partner or neighbour – that will never change, even as your caring responsibilities increase.
- Your own health and wellbeing are VITAL. Try to make time for yourself. Continue with your hobbies and sports. Accept help.

Contact Alzheimer Scotland for more help and information

Further information

This is one of a series of ‘For Carers, By Carers’ leaflets:

- Going for a diagnosis
- Helping someone with dementia to live well
- Working with professionals and services
- Going into hospital
- Moving into a care home
- Looking after yourself
- When problems arise
- Grief and loss

Email activevoice@alzscot.org or

Visit www.alzscot.org/ndcan for copies.

Useful contacts

Alzheimer Scotland’s
National Dementia
Advisor Service
0300 373 5774

Alzheimer Scotland’s
24 hour Freephone
Dementia Helpline
0808 808 3000

www.alzscot.org



About NDCAN

We are a national, member led campaigning and awareness raising group of current and former dementia carers in Scotland. Formed in 2011, we exist to make the voices of dementia carers heard and to raise awareness of the issues impacting on carers. Find out more about NDCAN and how to join us at www.alzscot.org/ndcan

‘For Carers, By Carers’ were first created in 2016 by NDCAN members, with funding from The Life Changes Trust, to share their knowledge to help other carers. In 2024 members reviewed and updated them.

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