

1. Be calm and patient
2. Face the person, speak clearly and slowly
3. Make sure that you have their attention by gently touching their arm and saying their name
4. Use short, simple sentences and say exactly what you mean
5. Try to get one idea across at a time
6. Allow plenty of time for the person to take in what you say and to reply
7. Try not to confuse or embarrass the person by correcting them bluntly
8. Use questions which ask for a simple answer
9. Don't ask questions which test their memory, e.g., 'who am I?' or 'what did you do yesterday?'
10. Talk about familiar people, places and ideas
11. Use the names of the people you are talking about instead of 'he' or 'she'. It will remind the person of who you are talking about
12. Use facial expressions and hand gestures to make yourself understood.

## Information and support

Our confidential Dementia Helpline, on Freephone 0808 808 3000 offers 24 hour information and emotional support. Call anytime to talk things over, find out about local services or for our free information pack.



**Alzheimer Scotland**  
Action on Dementia

**Alzheimer Scotland**  
160 Dundee Street  
Edinburgh EH11 1DQ  
Tel 0131 243 1453  
Email [membership@alzscot.org](mailto:membership@alzscot.org)

X [@alzscot](https://twitter.com/alzscot)  
Facebook [@alzheimerscotland](https://www.facebook.com/alzheimerscotland)

[www.alzscot.org](http://www.alzscot.org)

**24 HOUR**

**Dementia** **Alzheimer Scotland**  
Action on Dementia

# Helpline

**Freephone 0808 808 3000**  
Email [helpline@alzscot.org](mailto:helpline@alzscot.org)

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**Alzheimer Scotland**  
Action on Dementia



Communicating  
with someone who  
has dementia:

# Helpful Hints

# Helpful Hints

Dementia is an illness of the brain. When someone has dementia, brain cells are damaged and die faster than normal. This means the brain doesn't work as well as it should.

Every person who receives a diagnosis of dementia is different. The impact of the condition depends on which areas of the brain have been affected.

Memory loss, though common, is not the only symptom of dementia – it can be characterised by a range of other things.

## Actions speak louder than words!

A smile, touch or gesture can be just as important in getting a message across and showing that you care.

Sometimes holding the person's hand when you talk can be very reassuring.



## How might someone with dementia feel?

Imagine if you were to lose the ability to say the right word or understand what was being said. For example, if you were on holiday in a foreign country where you don't speak the language.

You may feel frustrated, angry and look for help, perhaps someone to interpret for you.

You might respond by not speaking at all and withdrawing into yourself or avoiding situations where you have to communicate with people.

This is how a person living with dementia may feel. People can live well with the condition for many years but there will be times when symptoms make life difficult.

## A person with dementia may also:

- feel under pressure because they can't cope as well as they used to
- feel that their independence and privacy are being taken away
- think that they are being judged for making a mistake
- be frightened by too much noise, too many people or a change to their routine
- already have poor hearing and eyesight which can be made worse by their dementia



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**Prevent.  
Care.  
Cure.**

The progress of the illness varies a lot from one person to another. Some issues are more common early in the illness and others tend to happen later, but people can live well with a diagnosis for many years.

Gradually, the person's ability to undertake everyday tasks can be affected. Their personality may also change – but they are still there beneath the illness.

There are about 90,000 people with dementia in Scotland today. This figure is likely to double within a generation. It will probably touch all of our lives at some point.

You may be able to reduce your risk of developing dementia in later life by:

- eating healthily
- staying mentally active
- keeping physically active
- maintaining your social networks



Originally compiled  
by Nicky Thomson, Good  
Morning Project Ltd and the North  
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