

## Further help

### First Response Service

If you or a loved one is in mental health crisis, you can call our 24-hour First Response Service on **111 (option 2)**. This service is for anyone, of any age, living in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Specially-trained mental health staff will speak to you and discuss with you your mental health care needs

### Alzheimer's Society

Dial 0300 222 11 22

### Urgent Care Cambridgeshire

Dial 111

### SANE

0300 304 7000 (lines open 6pm – 11pm, 365 days a year)

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### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns about any of CPFT's services, or would like more information please contact: Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on freephone 0800 376 0775 or e-mail [pals@cpft.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@cpft.nhs.uk)

### Out-of-hours' service for CPFT service users

Please call **NHS 111** for health advice and support.

If you require this information in another format such as braille, large print or another language, please let us know.

**HQ** Elizabeth House, Fulbourn Hospital, Cambridge CB21 5EF.  
**T** 01223 219400  
**F** 01480 398501

[www.cpft.nhs.uk](http://www.cpft.nhs.uk)



# Insight into dementia

May 2018



## What is dementia?

Dementia is not a disease in itself. It is a term used to describe a group of symptoms. These include a gradual loss of memory, a decline in the ability to think and reason and problems with communication. These symptoms are caused by a variety of different disorders and conditions. There are many signs of dementia and the risk of developing it increases dramatically with age.

## What are the signs?

Dementia is progressive but each person is unique and will experience dementia in their own way.

Symptoms include:

- Loss of memory - example forgetting the way home from the shops or a previously well-known route when driving.
- Being unable to remember names and places.
- Communication problems - a decline in the ability to talk, read and write.
- Mood changes - particularly as parts of the brain that control emotion are affected by the disease. People with dementia may also feel sad, frightened or angry about what is happening to them
- In the later signs, the person affected will have problems carrying out everyday tasks and will become increasingly dependent on others.

## Getting a diagnosis

Having a diagnosis will help you plan for the future. It is better to know what you are dealing with. With a diagnosis you may be able to benefit from any new treatments available.

Other health and social needs may be identified and appropriate action taken. You may be able to identify sources of advice and support such as the care provided by your local social services department. There is no simple straightforward test for dementia.

A diagnosis is usually made by excluding other causes. Your doctor (GP or specialist) will want to rule out infection, vitamin deficiency, thyroid gland problems, brain tumours, the side effect of drugs and depression. Some of these conditions are treatable so it is important they are identified.

## Self help

Once a person has been diagnosed with dementia he or she will have lots of questions to ask. The answers to many of these questions can be found in the Alzheimer's Society's booklet entitled "I'm told I have dementia". The booklet tells you what you can do and who you can turn to.

Carers are often surprised by the intensity of the emotions they feel especially by their anger and sadness. The Alzheimer's Society produces a number of publications and free factsheets giving essential information, practical tips and useful resources.

## Carers

Many carers of a person with dementia would not, to begin with, describe themselves as a carer. Usually they are the person's partner, son or daughter or close friend. They can have very mixed feelings about being in this caring role. The relationships between the carer and the person with dementia is usually complex. People caring for those with dementia may become increasingly socially isolated and stressed.

Carers' support groups provide opportunities for carers of people with dementia to get together and meet people in the same situation.

Carers' contacts are trained volunteers who provide support over the phone to carers who wish to talk to someone with knowledge about dementia and the responsibilities of caring.