



Information for Patients & Caregivers

What You Need to Know About Dementia?

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⊕ WHAT IS DEMENTIA?

“Dementia” is a generic term for a range of symptoms caused by damage to the brain. It can manifest itself in different ways, depending on which parts of the brain are affected. Normally, the person’s memory and ability to plan and carry out everyday tasks are impaired. Language and the person’s concept of time and orientation capacity are other so-called cognitive capacities that are adversely affected. Worry, depression and behavioural changes can also be part of the pattern of the illness. The symptoms make it difficult for people with dementia to cope with life without support from those close to them.

Dementia is not a single disease. It is a generic term for a range of symptoms that may be due to various diseases and types of damage. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common type of dementia.

⊕ WHAT ARE THE MAIN SYMPTOMS OF DEMENTIA?

The main symptoms of dementia are:

- Gradual loss of memory.
- Problem with thinking, planning and language.
- Failure to recognise people or objects.
- Changes in both behaviour and mood.

The way the disease progresses over time will vary from person to person.

If you or a member of your family are living with dementia, remember that support is available.

Person(s) living with dementia can have a better life by seeking support from their family and friends, their doctor, or the help line (RAHA) at Rumailah hospital.

⊕ WHAT YOUR DOCTOR WILL DO

If you’re worried that you might have dementia, your doctor will talk to you about the problems you have noticed and will want to hear from other close relatives to see if they have noticed any problems.



The doctor will then perform a physical examination and conduct a short test of your memory and other brain functions by asking a few standard questions.

Your doctor will also order a series of blood tests and may request a scan of your brain.

If no treatable underlying cause for your symptoms is found and your doctor suspects dementia – you will be referred to a specialist *Memory Clinic* for further assessment.

The Memory Clinic can provide support with making a diagnosis and help you to live well with dementia. They can also help with risk reduction and advise on available support services.

⊕ SPECIALIST CARE

When you are seen in the Memory Clinic, the Dementia Specialist will talk to you in detail about the problems you have been experiencing, changes in behaviour and mood, and how it affects your ability to care for yourself and carry out daily tasks.

The doctor will do a detailed examination of your brain function and, if it has not already been done, will request a brain scan and further blood tests.

Once the tests are complete, the Specialist will explain the underlying disease that is causing the symptoms you have been experiencing and outline the treatment options available to you.

The Specialist will also guide you on the support options available to help you and your family cope with the changes, and where to get further help and information.

ENSURE SPECIALIST
ADVICE
IS TAKEN



⊕ MEDICATION FOR DEMENTIA

Although there is not yet a cure for dementia, there are few medicines that can be used to help with the symptoms. The medicines will help delaying the progression of the disease.

The main medicines for dementia are:

- Donepezil
- Galantamine
- Rivastigmine
- Memantine

These can be prescribed in both tablet and liquid form and there are several different brands available in Qatar.

At present these medicines can only be prescribed by Specialists working at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC).

⊕ LIFESTYLE IMPROVEMENT AND RISK REDUCTION

The following lifestyle behaviours and interventions can help to delay or prevent the worsening of dementia:

- Increasing your physical activity.
- Quitting cigarette smoking.
- Eating a healthy, balanced diet.
- Cognitive training.
- Keeping a healthy weight.
- Taking your medications regularly to control hypertension, diabetes, or your cholesterol level (if you have any of these problems).

⊕ THERAPIES TO HELP WITH DEMENTIA

The following therapies that can help with the symptoms of dementia:

- **Cognitive and Occupational Therapy:**
 - Both will work on cognitive stimulation of patient and enable patient to function as independent as they can.
- **Physiotherapy:**
 - To help with exercise for maintaining mobility.
- **Speech & Language Therapy:**
 - To help with communication and swallowing.

Eating well, exercising regularly, listening to music and socialising with friends and family, can all help to maintain healthy brain function.

As the disease progresses, caregivers need to be aware of safety issues related to:

- Medication safety.
- Wandering and getting lost.
- Unsafe driving.
- Potential fire risks from cooking or smoking.

ALWAYS TAKE YOUR
MEDICINES AS PRESCRIBED
AND DISCUSS SIDE
EFFECTS WITH YOUR
SPECIALIST

TOP TIP:

Please ensure to carry all medications that you are currently taking Including any off the counter with you when you are going to see your specialist doctor so that he/she can see all medicines and review.

WARNING SIGNS OF DEMENTIA TO WATCH OUT FOR:

- Problems with language
- Difficulty performing familiar tasks
- Memory loss
- Problems keeping track of things
- Poor or decreased judgement
- Disorientation to time and place
- Changes in mood and behaviour
- Misplacing things
- Withdrawal from work or social activities

RAHA NATIONAL ALZHEIMER’S & MEMORY SERVICES HELPLINE:

IF YOU NEED URGENT HELP FOR A FAMILY MEMBER WHO HAS DEMENTIA, PLEASE CALL THE RAHA MEMORY SERVICES HELPLINE ON:

(+974) 4 026 2222

⊕ INFORMATION FOR CAREGIVERS

Looking after a loved one with dementia is difficult and gets progressively harder over time as symptoms often get worse.

To make sure your loved one gets the best care you need to take care of yourself and your own health needs. Common problems experienced by carers include:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Financial stress
- Social isolation
- Loss of self esteem
- Sleep deprivation
- Poor diet and lifestyle
- Long term ill health

If you experience any of the above or any other problems, be sure to discuss these with the Dementia Specialist Team. The team will be able to provide advice, support, and training to help you cope and take care of yourself.

⊕ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND HELP

The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) has developed a National Clinical Guideline on the Management of Dementia. This is published to the MOPH website:

www.moph.gov.qa

