

# What To Ask Your Doctor When You Have Been Diagnosed with Dementia



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Learning that you have Alzheimer's disease or another type of dementia can be overwhelming and confusing. You may be sad, angry, or scared. These feelings are normal. Learning what to expect and what steps to take next can help you channel your feelings into something positive and gain control.

## Learn what to expect

After you leave the doctor's office, you may think of questions you didn't ask. Jot down these questions as you think of them. Then schedule another appointment to talk with your doctor, nurse, or other healthcare professional. Finding out what to expect is the first step to taking control.

## Ask questions that matter to you

At that appointment, focus on what's most important to you now. For example, you may want to ask about your symptoms, how to take care of yourself, and how to plan for the future.



The questions you have now may be different than the questions you will have tomorrow.



Take notes. Bring a loved one with you to listen and take notes if you are comfortable doing so.



If you run out of time, that's OK. You can always ask more questions later.

## Stay connected with a healthcare professional along the way

Learning how to care for yourself and get the support you need is a process. Stay connected with a doctor, nurse, or other healthcare professional you trust to help you along the way. Even if that person doesn't have all the answers, they may point you in the right direction. Here are some ideas to help get the conversation started. If you think of questions that are not on this list, write them down and keep them handy!



## Sample questions to ask your doctor

### Understanding your dementia diagnosis

- What is dementia?
- What type of dementia do I have?
- Will my dementia progress? If so, how quickly?
- What should I expect in the future?
- What symptoms, other than memory loss, should I expect?

### Understanding who is on your care team

- What is your role in my care? Will that change if I have dementia?
- Who will be the main person I turn to when I have questions about or problems with my dementia?
- Are there any other types of professionals I should see? If so, can you help me set up a visit?
- How will members of my care team talk with each other? How will I know if they are talking to each other?
- Should someone come with me to my appointments? Who?

### Understanding how to communicate with your care team

- How often should I follow up with you if things are going well?
- What problems should I contact you about—and what's the best way to do that?

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## Understanding care coordinators (or navigators)

- What is a care coordinator (or navigator)?
- Does your office have a care coordinator (or navigator) who can help me?

## Setting up your care plan

*Make a care plan after a dementia diagnosis. Care plans describe how you and your loved ones can be cared for and supported. You can learn about care plans and download a fillable Care Plan Form at [www.cdc.gov/caregiving/guidelines/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/caregiving/guidelines/index.html).*

- Will you help me complete my care plan form today?  
(You should have the care plan form from the link above on-hand before asking this question.)
- If I become ill, how will I know if I should call your office or go to the emergency room?
- If I become ill and need to go to a nearby hospital, which hospital is best for me?
- What is an advance directive, power of attorney, and a physician's order for life-sustaining treatment or scope of treatment?
- What should I be doing to help myself?
- What can others do to help me at home?
- Is there anything I should change in my home environment?
- What resources are available to help my family and friends?

## Understanding your legal & financial options

- Can you refer me to someone who can answer questions about financial planning and dementia?
- Can you refer me to someone who can answer questions about legal matters and dementia?
- Is there a social worker in this office/clinic/hospital who could help me find resources?

## Understanding programs and resources that can help you

- Where can I go to get more information about dementia?
- Where can I go to get resources and support, and learn how to help myself?
- Where can my family and friends get resources and support, and learn how to support me?

## Understanding your physical health & medications

- What medications can help me? What are the pros and cons of those medications?
- How will dementia affect my overall health?
- What can I do to remain as healthy as possible?
- Will the other health conditions I have be affected?
- Will there be any changes to the medications I am already taking?
- What over-the-counter medications and supplements should I avoid?



## Understanding your mental health

*If you are overwhelmed with your diagnosis, or your feelings don't improve, mental health support can help. For information about types of mental health services and what to expect when using mental health services, visit [mhanational.org/get-help](http://mhanational.org/get-help) or [www.samhsa.gov/find-support](http://www.samhsa.gov/find-support).*

- Where can I find mental health and emotional support? When should I consider seeing a therapist?
- Where do I find a therapist?
- How can I connect with other people who have dementia?
- Will my dementia affect how I act and feel?
- Will I feel depressed or anxious?

## Looking forward

- Will my friends and family be affected?
- Will I be able to work?
- Will I be able to drive?
- Will I be able to take care of myself and stay in my home?
- Will my mobility be affected?
- Will I be in pain?
- What are my next steps after I leave the office today?

## Additional questions

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