

Getting the most out of GP and other health appointments



2 Dementia UK

When someone is diagnosed with dementia, or if they are in the process of seeking a diagnosis, they are likely to have a number of appointments, for example with a GP, memory service and other healthcare professionals.

This guide will help you get the most out of these appointments, with helpful questions to consider asking and space to record important information.

Useful information for the GP or specialist

Whether you are seeing the GP or other healthcare professional about possible symptoms of dementia or you or the person already have a diagnosis, it is helpful to take a record of any:

- concerns or worries you have
- new or increasing symptoms – what they are, when they happen (dates/times), and any triggers you have noticed
- issues around medication, such as side effects
- hearing, vision or balance problems
- other health issues

Questions to ask the GP or specialist

- What type of dementia has been diagnosed?
- What symptoms might occur now and in the future?
- What medications and other treatments, if any, are available?
- Are there any local support groups:
 - for the person with dementia – generally, and/or specific to their type of dementia?
 - for their family/carers, including children with a parent who



has young onset dementia (where symptoms develop before the age of 65)?

- Is there a schedule for follow-up appointments? With whom – eg the GP, a specialist nurse, the memory service?
- When will these appointments take place?
- Who will book these appointments? (ie will the clinic send a letter with appointment details, or do you need to arrange the appointment yourself?)
- Are there any local services that offer support with practical, social, financial and legal matters? Dementia UK's Helpline and virtual clinic appointments can also offer advice and support – please see Sources of support on p10

Remote consultations

Increasingly, medical appointments are being offered remotely by video call or phone. The information in this guide can be used for

remote consultations as well as face-to-face appointments. For more information on getting the most out of a remote consultation, please see Sources of support on p10.

Many people prefer in-person appointments, and they will still be necessary if physical examinations or tests are needed. If you would prefer to see your GP or other healthcare professional face to face, ask the surgery or clinic if this can be arranged.

Consent

If you are caring for someone with dementia, you may wish to be involved in their medical appointments, including in decisions about treatment. The person can give their GP and other healthcare professionals their consent to speak to you or other people about their care. This includes:

- consent to speak to their next of kin or another family member or friend – if so, ensure the healthcare professional has their contact details
- consent to share information with other health professionals (on a need-to-know basis)

The person can appoint you to be their ‘medical proxy’ or ‘trusted person’, which means you can speak to the GP on their behalf, including booking appointments for them, accessing their online medical information, and discussing treatment and support. Our leaflet on online GP services contains more information about this (please see Sources of support on p11).

It is also important for the person to make a lasting power of attorney for health and welfare. This appoints someone they trust (known as their ‘attorney’) to make decisions about their health and care in their best interests, if they lose mental capacity to make

these decisions themselves. For more information on lasting power of attorney, please see Sources of support on p10.

Tips for healthcare appointments

Before

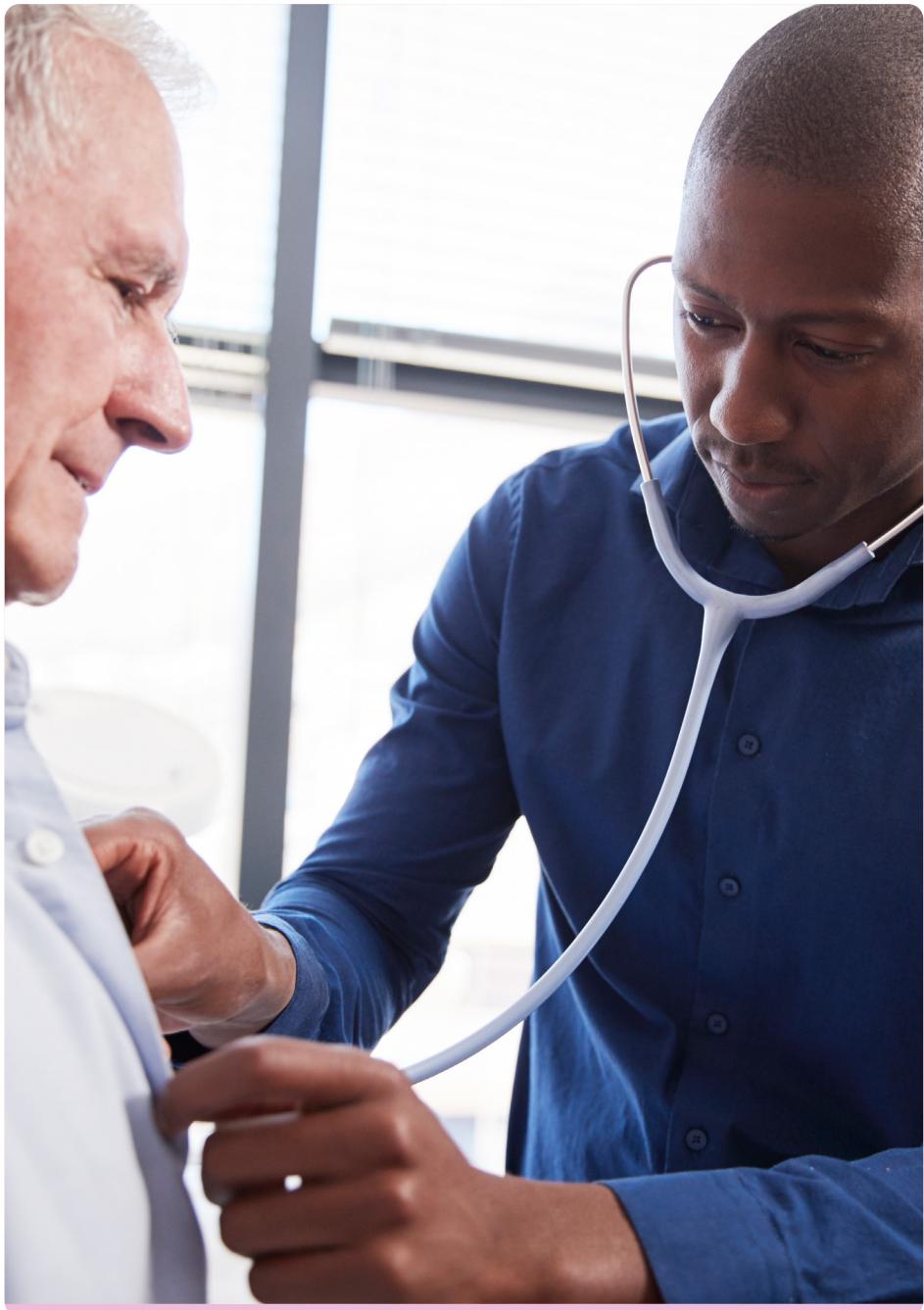
- If the person would like to see a particular GP, you can request this, although this may mean waiting longer for an appointment
- If you have more than one issue to discuss, you may wish to request a double appointment
- Write down the most important things you want to discuss
- Make a note of any changes in symptoms or behaviour
- Make a list of any medications and other tablets the person is taking, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamin supplements and natural remedies
- Ask if the person with dementia would like you or someone else to accompany them – this may make them feel more comfortable, and you can also share your own thoughts about their situation
- If you or the person with dementia needs an interpreter or chaperone, inform the surgery in advance
- For phone appointments, ensure the professional knows which number to call
- For video appointments, make sure you have received the joining link (contact the receptionist/practice manager if it has not arrived by the day before the appointment) and that the software is working and you know how to use it

During

- Make notes of important information, or ask a family member or friend to do this for you
- Do not be afraid to ask the healthcare professional to explain anything that you or the person with dementia do not understand, or repeat anything you did not hear clearly
- If the professional recommends any websites, support groups or other services, ask them to write the details down
- Ask if the person with dementia (and you, if you are their proxy or attorney) can receive a copy of any letters sent to other health professionals – this is their right

After

- If you are told to book a follow-up appointment, it is a good idea to do this before you leave the surgery or clinic
- Make sure you phone for test results, if you have been told to
- If the person has been waiting some time for test results or details of their next appointment, contact the surgery/clinic to chase this up
- Consider downloading the NHS app on the person's phone and linking this with their GP surgery so they can see their health information, book appointments and request repeat prescription – you can also have access to their records through the app if you are their trusted person or attorney
- All people with dementia should be offered an annual review by their GP. However, this often does not happen automatically, so if the person you care for is not called in, you may need to request the review yourself



Notes

Record of appointment

Who will be the main healthcare contact? (Name, job title)

What are their contact details?

How often will the person see or speak to them?

Will any further tests or scans be needed?

If so, when, where, and how will the person find out the results?

What (if any) medications have been prescribed and how should they be taken?

When is the next appointment?

What other health and/or social care professionals will the person see? (Name, job title, what they do, contact details)

Date/time/location of the next appointment

Any other notes

Notes

Details of other appointments

Type of appointment (eg GP, memory clinic)

Name of health contact

Date

Type of appointment (eg GP, memory clinic)

Name of health contact

Date

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Name of health contact

Date

Type of appointment (eg GP, memory clinic)

Name of health contact

Date

Sources of support

If you are caring for someone with dementia or living with the condition yourself, you can register for our free online sessions, ‘Dementia: what next?’ Hosted by dementia specialist Admiral Nurses, they cover topics like types of dementia, symptoms, financial and legal issues and planning for the future. Sign up at

➤ dementiauk.org/dementia-what-next

To speak to an Admiral Nurse on our free Helpline, call **0800 888 6678** (Monday-Friday 9am-9pm, Saturday and Sunday 9am-5pm, every day except 25th December) or email ➤ helpline@dementiauk.org

If you prefer, you can book a phone or video call with an Admiral Nurse at a time to suit you: please visit ➤ dementiauk.org/book

Dementia UK resources

After a diagnosis of dementia: next steps checklist

➤ dementiauk.org/after-a-diagnosis-of-dementia

Getting a diagnosis of dementia

➤ dementiauk.org/getting-a-diagnosis-of-dementia

Getting the most out of remote consultations

➤ dementiauk.org/remote-consultations

Lasting power of attorney

➤ dementiauk.org/lasting-power

Medication and dementia

➤ dementiauk.org/medication

Mental capacity and decision-making

➲ dementiauk.org/capacity-decision-making

Online GP services

➲ dementiauk.org/gp-online-services

Tests for dementia

➲ dementiauk.org/tests-for-dementia

Young onset dementia: getting a diagnosis

➲ dementiauk.org/young-onset-dementia-getting-a-diagnosis

Young onset dementia: next steps after a diagnosis

➲ dementiauk.org/young-onset-dementia-next-steps-after-a-diagnosis

Young Dementia Network personal checklist – for recording dementia symptoms

➲ youngdementianetwork.org/personal-checklist

Other resources

NHS: accessing GP services for someone else with proxy access

➲ nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/gp-services-for-someone-else-proxy-access

NHS app

➲ nhs.uk/nhs-app

NHS: GP appointments and bookings

➲ nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/gp-appointments-and-bookings

NHS: referrals for specialist care

➲ nhs.uk/nhs-services/hospitals/referrals-for-specialist-care

**To speak to a dementia specialist Admiral Nurse
about any aspect of dementia:**

Contact our Helpline:

0800 888 6678 or helpline@dementiauk.org

Book a virtual appointment:

dementiauk.org/book

**Our charity relies entirely on donations to fund our
life-changing work. If you would like to donate to help us
support more families:**

- Call **0300 365 5500**
- Visit **dementiauk.org/donate**
- Scan the QR code

Thank you.



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