



Getting a diagnosis

“How do I get a diagnosis of dementia?” is one of the most common questions we hear on the Dementia UK Helpline. To help you understand what’s involved, we’ve pulled together the most important information.

Not sure if it’s dementia?

Common symptoms include changes in:

Memory

Problem-solving skills

Concentration

Communication

Motivation

Ability to carry out everyday tasks

These could be signs of another condition that could be treated – like an infection, anxiety or depression – so it’s important to get them checked out by a GP.



“It might feel scary but the sooner your loved one gets a dementia diagnosis, the sooner you can all start planning for the future.”

Dementia specialist Admiral Nurse Vic



If you need more information or support during the diagnosis process, please call our Helpline on **0800 888 6678** or book a virtual appointment at dementiauk.org/book

“A diagnosis can help the person access the right support, like benefits or medication (for certain types of dementia). You can also have conversations as a family about how to make any adjustments and live well with dementia.”

Dementia specialist Admiral Nurse Gary



Five steps to a dementia diagnosis

1

Getting a diagnosis starts with seeing a GP. You can prepare by keeping a diary of symptoms, when they occur and the impact they have, to take with you.

2

At the appointment, the GP will ask questions about the symptoms, carry out a physical examination and order blood tests to rule out other potential causes. They should also do some simple memory checks, like asking what day it is or naming everyday objects.

3

If they're concerned, the GP will refer the person to an NHS memory clinic, specialist nurse, psychiatrist or neurologist for further assessment. Waiting for a referral does take time but if you're worried about how long it's taking, go back to the GP. Find out what you can do while waiting for an assessment in our [expert guide](#).

4

During a memory clinic assessment, the specialist will test the person's attention, memory, language and visual awareness by asking them to memorise an address or copy a diagram, for example. The specialist might also request a brain scan if the GP hasn't already.

5

It could take several appointments over a few months, maybe with different specialists, before your loved one is diagnosed with dementia. When they are, they should be told what type they have, what happens next and possible treatments.



Download more [bite-size guides](#) and our [expert guide to living with dementia](#).