

Department of
Occupational Therapy

Caring for Persons with Dementia



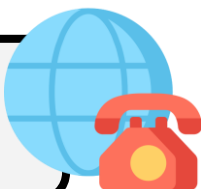
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What is Dementia?

Dementia affects the brain and typically progresses in 3 stages: mild, moderate and severe. Persons with dementia may experience changes in behaviour and face difficulties with the following:

Learn new information
and skills



Problem-solve and
make judgements



Remember new
information or
recall recent
events

Communicate
his/her needs



Care for
oneself



Mild Dementia

Characteristics of a person with mild dementia:

1. Memory:

- Difficulty in remembering recent events
- Asking repetitive questions



2. Communication:

- Slow to respond during conversations
- May require time to express thoughts, feelings and needs

3. Function:

- Still able to perform familiar and routine tasks
- May experience difficulty with: money management, taking public transport, preparing meals and making decisions



Moderate Dementia

Characteristics of a person with moderate dementia:

1. Memory:

- Difficulty in remembering names
- Difficulty recognising faces of family and friends



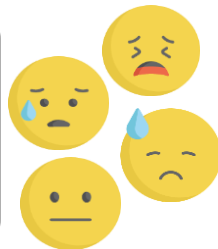
2. Communication:

- Difficulty following instructions and conversations
- Repeats statements and questions



3. Behaviour and/or personality changes:

- May express self through behaviours such as irritability, agitation, anxiety, withdrawal



4. Function:

- Difficulty in basic activities of daily living such as showering, dressing and personal hygiene.
- Would be at higher risk of falls



Severe Dementia

Characteristics of a person with severe dementia:

1. Memory:

- Unable to recognise most family and friends



2. Communication:

- Speech ability limited to a few words
- Tends to communicate through non-verbals e.g. agitation can be a way of showing discomfort



3. Behavioural and/or personality changes:

- Repetitive crying and shouting



4. Function:

- Needs help with most aspects of daily tasks
- May decline self-care activities
- Loss of strength in arms and legs
- Could be bedbound



Abilities of Persons with Dementia

Persons with Dementia can still lead a meaningful life with appropriate support from family and loved ones, as they still have many abilities, such as:

1

Habitual Skills

Able to engage in familiar daily activities such as self-care tasks

2

Long-term memory

Able to recall things that happened in their past (family life, education, important events)

3

Experiences and feelings

Able to feel appreciated and valued after spending time with their loved ones

4

Ability to be meaningfully engaged

Able to use their remaining assets to engage in meaningful activities (singing songs, dancing, helping with simple household chores)

Impact of Dementia on Persons with Dementia

Persons with Dementia experience:

Over-assistance by carers in daily self-care tasks

A lack of engagement

Isolation

DUE TO

Reduced ability to perform daily self care tasks (physically or cognitively)

Restrictions from family members due to fear of falls or injuries

Carers unsure about how to engage persons with dementia



Importance of Engaging Persons with Dementia

Can be in the form of (1) Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) or (2) Leisure

It is still important to engage persons with Dementia in ADLs and leisure activities.



Maintains physical and mental well-being



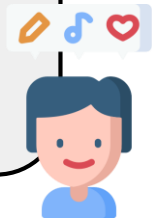
Enhances both meaning and quality of life



General Principles in Engaging Persons with Dementia

Respect person with dementia as an individual

- Conduct activities that encourage their self-worth and personal strengths
- Use personal life and background to plan activities to engage them with



Communicate to the persons with dementia at their level

- Break down tasks into simple steps
- Use verbal cues, visual aids, physical demonstration to help the person





Maintain a consistent routine and structure



- Consider using an activity schedule to provide structure for their day
- Introduce new activities gradually



Engagement Strategies for ADLs (Dressing)

Strategy	Mild Dementia	Moderate Dementia	Severe Dementia
<p>Setting Up the Task</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide verbal prompts for the person to choose what to wear from the wardrobe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer 2 to 3 choices of clothing to be worn - Provide verbal prompts for the person to lay out clothes in order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assist in selecting and laying out the clothes for the person
<p>Providing Assistance</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide verbal encouragement to the person to put on their own clothes - Ask the person if he/she requires any help (eg. to orientate the shirt front or back) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide verbal prompts for the person to put on clothes in the order that he/she usually does it - Provide physical prompts (e.g. gentle tap on the body to lift up arm) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide one word verbal prompts for the person during the dressing task (e.g. lift) - Provide physical assistance to put on clothes if needed



Engagement Strategies for ADLs (Showering)

Strategy	Mild Dementia	Moderate Dementia	Severe Dementia
<p>Setting Up the Task</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage the person to gather the items required for showering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide visual prompts such as brightly coloured bottles, or label bottles accordingly - Gather the required items needed for the person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider use of scented shower gel (e.g. lavender) to calm the person down - Assist to squeeze shampoo/soap for the person - Plan and follow a routine for showers
<p>Providing Assistance</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide supervision during showering task - Give verbal prompts to the person when needed (e.g. Ask the person to wash his/her back if he/she forgets) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide step-by-step verbal prompts to shower on his/her own (e.g. “wash your hair”, “soap your face”) - Provide visual prompts (e.g. point to the body part, print out steps of showering) to guide the person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use firm, circular massaging movements while soaping and rinsing the person - Provide physical assistance for showering if needed

Engagement Strategies for ADLs (Eating)

***Only applicable for persons on oral feeding*

Speak to Medical Team/Speech Therapist to comment on food consistency if there are concerns with swallowing

Strategy	Mild Dementia	Moderate Dementia	Severe Dementia
<p>Setting Up the Task</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan what and when to eat with the person - Encourage the person to help in portioning out the food - Encourage the person to help to clear up after his/her meal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide a variety of food for the person to choose by serving food with different colours, tastes, textures and sizes if the person refuses to eat - Ensure your environment is quiet with minimal distractions - Provide modification of utensils as needed. (E.g. a bowl instead of a plate or a straw to assist in drinking) 	
<p>Providing Assistance</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage the person to self-feed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide verbal prompts (e.g. prompt him/her to swallow the food) if needed - Provide physical prompts (e.g. gently tap the person and remind him/her to continue eating) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide physical prompts (e.g. place a spoon in the hand, guide the scooping and bring the spoon to mouth) - Provide one-word verbal instructions (eg. "open" and demonstrate by opening own mouth)

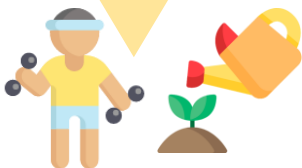
Leisure Engagement

Identify an activity of interest to the person based on knowledge of his/her interests, career and/or past routines. You may also select one of the activities suggested below as a starting point. Remember there is no minimum timeframe to conduct any activity. It is more important that the person enjoys the activity.

Mild Dementia:



- Newspaper discussions
- Exercise
- Art and craft
- Board games
- Cooking
- Gardening
- Word search/crosswords
- Reminiscence objects
- Flower arranging



Severe Dementia:

- Smells
- Food tasting
- Hand massage
- Music
- Lights
- Textured objects



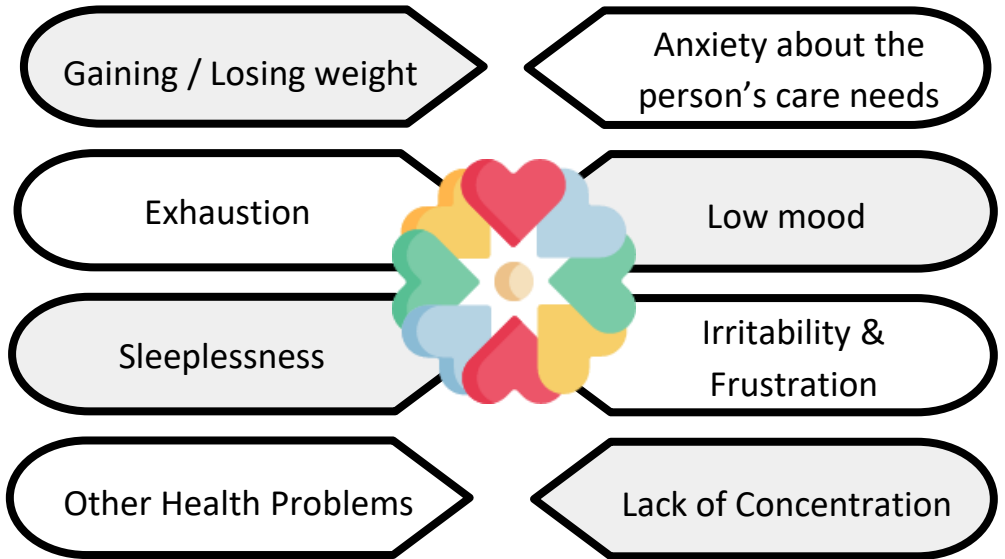
Moderate Dementia:

- Food tasting
- Hand massage
- Exercises
- Singing and dancing
- Simple household chores: sweeping, polishing, wiping tables
- Reminiscence objects



Helping Caregivers of Persons with Dementia to Cope

Caregivers for persons with dementia may face some levels of stress and burnout. Caring for a person with dementia can be overwhelming and high levels of stress may cause the following physical and mental issues in caregivers:



Tips to Manage Caregiver Stress

Self-care

- Take care of your own physical and mental health
- Recognise signs of burnout and take a break when necessary – possibly when the person with dementia is resting
- Continue to do things that you enjoy
- Do simple deep breathing exercises to relax yourself
- Reward yourself

Getting Support from Family

- Set-up a caregiving schedule to distribute care duties among other carers

Seek Professional Help

- Talk to someone you trust about your feelings
- Consider Day Care services, Respite Care services, Eldersitter services
- Seek advice from a medical professionals if you have any concerns with managing the behaviour of the person with dementia

Improving Caregiver's Own Skills and Network

- Participate in caregiver support groups or other social activities



Useful Links

Scan the QR codes below with your smart devices to access more resources on:



Tips, brochures and other resources for Dementia

<https://dementiafriendly.sg/Resource>
Hotline: 1800-650-6060
(Singapore Silver Line)



AIC Financial Assistance Schemes for caregivers

<https://www.aic.sg/financial-assistance>



More about Caregiver Stress and Caregiver Stress Checklist

<https://www.aic.sg/caregiving/caregiver%20Stress>



Respite Care for Caregivers

<https://www.aic.sg/caregiving/Pages/Caring%20For%20Myself/getting-respite.aspx>

Caring for Persons with Dementia” is meant for your personal reference but does not replace professional advice. Please consult your Occupational Therapist if you require further clarification.

Occupational Therapy Clinic
TTSH Medical Centre, Level B1

Contact:
6357 7000 (Central Hotline)



Scan the QR Code with your smart phone to access
the information online or visit
<http://bit.ly/TTSHHealth-Library>.

Was this information helpful?
Please feel free to email us if you have any
feedback regarding what you have just read
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