

## **What is dementia?**

The word dementia describes a set of symptoms that may include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language. Dementia is caused when the brain is damaged by diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease or a series of strokes. Dementia is progressive, which means the symptoms will gradually get worse.

## **If I have memory problems, does it mean that I have dementia?**

No, memory and thinking problems can be caused by many other things, such as depression, anxiety, stress, vitamin deficiencies, infections, and others. However, if your memory and thinking is getting gradually worse to the point that it started affecting your everyday life, you should definitely consult your doctor.

## **What shall I do if I am worried about my or someone else's memory?**

Your GP is the first point of contact. Tell them about the problems you are experiencing. The GP should examine you to find out if there are any physical problems that can potentially cause your difficulties, and they may also do a short mental abilities test. If GP feels you need a specialist assessment, he should then refer you to the Memory Service in Westminster for a more detailed investigation.

## **What will happen at the Memory Service?**

A specialist will either visit you at home, or meet with you at the Memory Service for a more thorough assessment. As there is no single test for dementia, they will look for signs of dementia through asking about your personal history, and also consulting your family members. They will also conduct a more detailed mental abilities assessment. This assessment can be conducted in any language as the Memory Service has access to professional interpreters.

## **Why is important to receive a diagnosis?**

In most cases, dementia progresses rather slowly, and a lot of people with dementia are able to enjoy relatively high functioning and good quality of life for much time, but they need the right support. Having the diagnosis means that you and your family will know the cause of your difficulties, you will receive information about service and support available, and you will have time to plan for the future to make sure you will be in control even when your abilities decline. Also, you may be offered a medication that may slow down the progression of the disease.

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