

# What is dementia?

Are you forgetting so many things that your daily life is becoming difficult? Do you have problems remembering common words or how to get to the local shop? These could be signs of dementia.

### In this brochure you can read more about:

- **What** is dementia
- **How to find out** if you have dementia
- **How to get answers** to basic questions about dementia

## What is dementia?

Dementia is caused when the brain is affected by certain diseases or conditions. Dementia causes changes to the brain over time. Several diseases may lead to dementia. None of these are infectious. Alzheimer's disease is the most common type. Common to all the dementia diseases is that:

- You may start to forget things (have problems with your memory). You may, for example, forget that your family has just visited you, or the names of people you know well
- You may find it difficult to do everyday things you always used to manage, for example finding your way to the local shop, locking the door or making your bed
- You may lose interest in activities you used to like, such as spending time with family or friends
- You may start to forget quite common words you have always used in Norwegian or your native language

## Who can get dementia?

Both men and women may contract dementia. Most are elderly people over 65 years of age. Sometimes younger people may also get dementia.

## How can you find out if you have dementia?

Your regular GP will help you determine whether you have dementia. Book an appointment with your GP if you are worried you might have dementia.

## Your appointment with your GP doctor

It's important that you prepare before your appointment with your GP doctor (fastlege). It's a good idea to prepare with a person who can help you. This is a list of things you can do before your appointment:

- Inform your doctor if you need an interpreter. This service will not cost you anything.
- Think through changes and symptoms you or your family have experienced
- Note down all medications you are taking, or bring them with you to your appointment
- Make a list of things you want to ask about
- Ask a person who can help you to come with you to the appointment
- Don't be afraid to talk about how you are doing

**The GP is there to help you.**

## Why is it important to go to your GP for a check-up?

- It's important to determine whether you have dementia or other diseases (set a diagnosis)
- A diagnosis is necessary to give you the right assistance (follow-up) or treatment
- A diagnosis can make it simpler for family and friends to help you in a good way

## How does the GP check if you have dementia?

- Ask you how you manage your day-to-day life
- Examine what you remember
- Examine what you understand
- Examine your blood (take blood samples)
- Send you to take an x-ray of your brain
- Send you to a doctor who is an expert on dementia (refer you to a specialist). The specialist will examine you more thoroughly

## Do you need an interpreter?

Tell the doctor when you book your appointment that you need an interpreter. The doctor will book one for you.

Tell your doctor what language you speak.

You have the right to an interpreter. You do not need to pay for this service. An interpreter is under the obligation of confidentiality.

## Is there medication for dementia?

There is no medication that can cure dementia. For some types of dementia there are medicines that can make the changes and complaints you are experiencing easier to live with by lessening the symptoms. The earlier you can start using such medicines the more effective they will be.

## How can you live with dementia?

There are many things you can do to live a good life with dementia.

Here are some suggestions for what you can do:

- Spend much time with family and friends
- Tell others how you are doing
- Ask family and friends for assistance
- Talk with others in the same situation as you are
- Carry on with your interests and hobbies, if you can manage
- Get exercise. Go for walks
- Eat well and eat healthy food
- Learn more about the disease and how to live with it

You can find more information in the GP's office and on the internet

- Discuss what assistance you will need with your GP  
(The GP can help you contact the local authority's services)
- Speak with the community-nursing service (*hjemmetjenesten*)  
in your area

## Who can you contact for more information?

- Speak with your **GP**
- Contact **the community-nursing service in your municipality**  
Call the switchboard in the municipality where you live and ask to be put through. You can obtain the telephone number to the switchboard in your municipality by calling:
  - **800HELSE (800 43 573)**
  - Go to the website **www.norge.no**. Enter the name of your municipality in the search field
- **Helsenorge** is a website operated by the Norwegian authorities. Here you can find general information about health, illness, rights and assistance.
  - Call **800HELSE (800 43 573)**
  - Go to the website **www.helsenorge.no**
- There is a **health and social services ombudsman** in each county. This office can provide more information about which assistance and rights you have if you become ill. You can obtain the telephone number for the patient and social services ombudsman in your county by:
  - Calling **800HELSE (800 43 573)**
  - Go to **www.helsenorge.no/pasient-og-brukerombudet**
- **Demenslinjen** (the dementia helpline) is a telephone helpline operated by the National Association for Public Health. Here you can obtain more information about dementia, assistance and rights. They can give you advice and answer your questions.
  - Call **Demenslinjen 23 12 00 40**
  - Go to the website **www.nasjonalforeningen.no/demenslinjen**
- Find out whether there are **people you know** who can give you advice or help

## Here you can write down important information:

Your regular GP (*fastlege*):

GP office address:

Changes and symptoms:

Medicines:

Questions for your GP:

Name of specialist: