

What are the very early signs of dementia?

People in the early stages of dementia may have mood and personality changes. They may also have difficulties with short-term memory, such as forgetting things or events.

Early indicators of dementia

Memory problems alone don't mean you have dementia. The symptoms must [significantly interfere](#)^{Trusted Source} with your everyday life for a doctor to diagnose dementia.

Dementia can cause impairments that affect:

- memory
- reasoning and problem-solving abilities
- language skills
- communication
- focus

Depending on the cause, if a doctor diagnoses dementia early, treatment options may help slow cognitive decline.

1. Subtle short-term memory changes

Having trouble with memory can be an early symptom of dementia. The changes are often subtle and tend to involve short-term memory. A person with dementia may be able to remember events that took place years ago but not what they had for breakfast.

A person with dementia may have other changes in their short-term memory, such as:

- forgetting where they placed items
- struggling to remember why they entered a particular room
- forgetting what they were supposed to do on any given day
- difficulty finishing a task they started, like forgetting to turn off the oven after cooking

2. Difficulty finding the right words

Another early symptom of dementia is difficulty with communicating thoughts. A person with dementia may have difficulty explaining something or finding the right words to express themselves. They may also stop in the middle of a sentence and not know how to continue.

Having a conversation with a person who has dementia can be challenging, and it may take longer than usual for them to express their thoughts or feelings.

3. Changes in mood

A change in mood is also common with dementia. If you have dementia, it may not be easy to recognize this in yourself, but you may notice this change in someone else. [Depression](#), for instance, is common in the [early stages of dementia](#).

Someone who has dementia may also seem more fearful or anxious than they were before. They may get easily upset if their usual daily routine changes, or if they find themselves in unfamiliar situations.

Along with mood changes, you might also notice a shift in personality.

4. Apathy

[Apathy](#), or listlessness, is a common symptom of early dementia. A person with dementia may lose interest in hobbies or activities they used to enjoy. They may not want to go out anymore or have fun.

They may also lose interest in spending time with friends and family and seem emotionally flat.

5. Difficulty completing tasks

A subtle shift in the ability to complete everyday tasks is another possible early indicator of dementia. This usually starts with difficulty doing more complex tasks, like:

- keeping track of bills and finances
- following a recipe
- playing a game that has a lot of rules

Along with completing familiar tasks, a person with dementia may find it hard to learn new things or follow new routines.

6. Confusion

Someone in the early stages of dementia may often become confused. They may have trouble remembering faces, knowing what day or month it is, or figuring out where they are.

Confusion can occur for a number of reasons and apply to different situations. For example, they may misplace their car keys, forget what comes next in the day, or have difficulty remembering someone they recently met.

7. Difficulty following storylines

Difficulty following storylines is a classic early symptom of dementia. People with dementia often forget the meaning of words they hear or find it difficult to follow conversations or TV programs.

8. A failing sense of direction

A person's sense of direction and spatial orientation can start to worsen with the onset of dementia. They may have difficulty recognizing common landmarks and forget how to get to places that were once familiar.

It may also become more difficult to follow a series of directions and step-by-step instructions.

9. Repetition

The person may repeat daily tasks, such as shaving or bathing, or they may collect items obsessively. They may repeat the same questions in a conversation or tell the same story more than once.

10. Difficulty adapting to change

For someone in the early stages of dementia, the experience can cause fear. Suddenly, they can't remember people they know or follow what others are saying. They can't remember why they went to the store and may get lost on the way home.

Because of this, they might crave routine and be afraid to try new experiences. Difficulty adapting to change is also a typical symptom of early dementia.

11. Poor judgment

Another consequence of cognitive decline is losing the ability to make good decisions. For instance, a person with dementia may be unable to recognize dangerous situations. They may try to walk across a busy street without waiting until it's safe or head outside wearing summer clothes when it's snowing.

Another hallmark of poor judgment with dementia is the inability to use good financial judgment. Someone who was previously careful with their money may start giving money away to people or causes they hardly know.

What is the difference between Alzheimer's and typical age-related changes?

Signs of Alzheimer's and Dementia	Typical Age-Related Changes
Poor judgment and decision-making	Making a bad decision once in a while
Inability to manage a budget	Missing a monthly payment
Losing track of the date or the season	Forgetting which day it is and remembering it later

Signs of Alzheimer's and Dementia	Typical Age-Related Changes
Difficulty having a conversation	Sometimes forgetting which word to use
Misplacing things and being unable to retrace steps to find them	Losing things from time to time

Here's a link to the seven stages:

<https://act.alz.org/site/DocServer/sevenstages.pdf?docID=16881>

Information and Resources

My trust lawyer responded with the following information:

Hi Donna –

The trust, health and financial powers of attorney should be what is needed. However, if the diagnosed individual is unwilling to acknowledge the issue and continues to act as a trustee on the trust, or if the individual is acting unilaterally for accounts that are individually owned, then the recourse would be to have a guardianship or conservatorship appointed for the individual.

This is what I found online:

Essential legal documents for managing Alzheimer's include a durable power of attorney, advance directives, and a living will. These documents help ensure that a person's wishes regarding healthcare and financial decisions are respected as the disease progresses.

Key Legal Documents

Document Type	Purpose
Durable Power of Attorney	Allows a trusted individual to make financial and legal decisions on behalf of the person with Alzheimer's when they can no longer do so.
Advance Directives	Provides instructions for healthcare decisions, including naming a healthcare agent and specifying treatment preferences.
Living Will	Outlines a person's wishes regarding medical treatment in situations where they cannot communicate their preferences.

Eligibility for VA Home Care Benefits

Spouses of veterans typically do not qualify for VA home care benefits unless they meet specific criteria. Here are the key points regarding eligibility:

General Eligibility Criteria

- **Surviving Spouses:** Only surviving spouses of veterans may be eligible for certain VA benefits, including home care, if the veteran qualifies for specific programs.
- **Conditions:** The surviving spouse must meet certain conditions, such as not having remarried and being married to the veteran at the time of their death.

Available Benefits for Spouses

While spouses may not directly qualify for VA home care benefits, they can access some benefits that are available to veterans, depending on their circumstances. These may include:

- **Health Care:** Some health care benefits may be available to spouses, but they are generally tied to the veteran's service and eligibility.

- **Financial Assistance:** Spouses may qualify for financial assistance programs that help with costs related to home care or other needs.

Conclusion

In summary, spouses of veterans have limited access to VA home care benefits, primarily restricted to surviving spouses under specific conditions. It is essential for spouses to check their eligibility for any available benefits through the VA.

What are the eligibility criteria for VA home care benefits for spouses?

To qualify for VA home care benefits as a spouse, you must be married to a veteran who has served at least 90 days of active duty, with one day during a wartime period, and the veteran must have been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. Additionally, you may need to meet certain age or disability criteria and demonstrate financial need.

An interesting find:

<https://www.elitecruisesandvacationstravel.com/upcoming-dementia-friendly-cruises.html>

This group voyage is appropriate for:

Caregivers looking for support, resources, and educational programs

Wheelchair users or travelers with accessibility requirements

Travelers with Alzheimer's/Dementia

Travelers with a diagnosis that may necessitate RN/medical support while vacationing.

Resources:

Health.clevelandclinic.org

michaeljfox.org

parkinsons.org

healthgrades.com

alz.org

<https://www.stopsarcoidosis.org/global-clinic-alliance/>