

Further information

Dementia – “The Communication Disease”
by Professor Alison Wray

This short video is very clear and helpful
for people and families living with
dementia. Search on YouTube or use the
link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6uu63PqWGaU>

Support groups and advice:

Age UK: www.ageuk.org.uk

Advice line: 0800 678 1602 or ask in your
local Age UK charity shop.

Dementia UK: www.dementiauk.org

Dementia helpline: 0800 888 6678

Alzheimer’s Society:

www.alzheimers.org.uk

National helpline: 0333 150 3456

Oxfordshire helpline: 01235 531989

Email: oxford@alzheimers.org.uk

Concerns and complaints

We aim to provide you with a high quality
service at all times. However, if you have
any concerns, complaints or comments
about your experience of our service then
please tell a member of the team or
contact the Patient Advice and Liaison
Service on freephone 0800 328 7971.

If you would like to have information translated
into a different language, please contact the
Equality and Diversity Team at:

EqualityandInclusion@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

أرجى الاتصال بنا إذا كنتم ترغبون في الحصول على
المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بتنسيق مختلف.

আপনি এই তথ্য অন্য ভাষায় বা আলাদা আকারে Bengali
পেতে চাইলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।
Urdu اگر آپ یہ معلومات دیگر زبان یا مختلف فارمیٹ میں چاہتے
ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

Chinese 若要以其他語言或格式提供這些資訊，
請與我們聯繫

Polish Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym
formacie, skontaktuj się z nami.

Portuguese Queira contactar-nos se pretender as informações
noutro idioma ou num formato diferente.

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
Trust Headquarters
Warneford Hospital
Warneford Lane
Oxford
OX3 7JX

Switchboard: 01865 901 000

Email: enquiries@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

Website: www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

Become a member of our Foundation Trust
www.ohftnhs.uk/membership

OH 119.20

NHS

Oxford Health
NHS Foundation Trust



Speech and Language Therapy

**Communication
and Dementia**

Dementia is a progressive condition. It affects memory and thinking, which leads to communication difficulties. Dementia affects people differently. You may find some or all of the following tasks become more difficult over time: expressing yourself, concentrating, understanding what people say, reading and writing.

You may find that you:

- cannot always find the words you need
- forget names, facts and recent events
- get mixed up when trying to explain or tell a story
- forget what you were talking about or lose track of the conversation
- cannot always process what people are saying to you
- no longer read or write like you used to

These changes to communication can feel unsettling and can lead to frustration. It is important to note, dementia is a progressive condition which causes difficulties remembering and thinking. These skills are needed for communication, so unfortunately this also gets harder over time.

The Adult Speech and Language Therapy service in Oxfordshire is currently not commissioned to provide therapy sessions for communication difficulties caused by dementia. However, the strategies in this leaflet can help you to retain your abilities for longer and compensate for lost abilities. This can help to make communication easier and more enjoyable. **It is very important to enlist the support of the people closest to you.** They can support you by helping you remember strategies, and by using the strategies themselves when talking to you.

Ideas and advice

Consider telling people about your diagnosis if you feel comfortable. This can reduce embarrassment if you forget a name or make mistakes.

Concentration and comprehension

- When speaking reduce distractions e.g. turning off the radio/TV, or moving away from people's conversations.
- It is easier to understand when people speak slowly, using short sentences.
- When someone has not understood you fully, they should say what they have understood and check with you to see if it is right.

Talking and expressing yourself

- People living with dementia can find it difficult to think of what to talk about. Others should be prepared to take the lead and start up conversations themselves.
- Mistakes and memory lapses are to be expected. Try to be patient with yourself. The important thing is for you to be able to express your thoughts. You will be at your best when feeling calm and rested. When feeling upset or frustrated, communication will be more difficult.
- If you cannot think of a word, describe it or use a gesture.
- Others should be patient and allow extra time for you to express yourself, as this can take longer than it used to.
- Others should avoid speaking for you, but can make suggestions and check with you whether it is right.

Top tips for communication partners (carers, friends and family members)

- Avoid drawing attention to mistakes and memory lapses. If the person says something which seems off-topic, respond to this before returning to your question.
- Follow the lead of the person in conversation. They may enjoy telling old stories from their past, even though you may have heard them before.
- Provide support and prompting tactfully when you notice the other person is becoming frustrated.
- Follow the lead of the person in conversation. They may enjoy telling old stories from their past, even though you may have heard them before.
- Provide support and prompting tactfully when you notice the other person is becoming frustrated.

Advanced dementia

In the late stages, some people lose the ability to understand and to use language. They may no longer be able to follow instructions or use speech to communicate. They will be reliant on others to support them. You can still connect with the person by using touch, eye contact and facial expression. Although they may not understand the words that you say, they may respond to your tone of voice.