

# 5 things you should know about dementia

Dementia is something that affects families all over the UK, and the number of families is expected to rise over the next few years.

By 2025, more than a million people will have been diagnosed with the condition, which can have a considerable impact on the lives of the individuals and their families.

## **1. Nearly half of people with dementia go undiagnosed**

The symptoms of dementia can often be mistaken for other conditions, especially in young people because it is often thought to be something that only affects the elderly. The term dementia describes a wide range of symptoms that steadily worsen over time, but early intervention can ensure people get the support that they need to plan and prepare for the future.

As dementia is caused by damage to the brain, it's not possible to reverse the effects, however, there are a number of treatments that can slow down the disease progression. Healthy lifestyle and keeping active can reduce the risk of developing dementia.

## **2. You can still lead a full life with dementia**

Dementia care has come a long way in the past few years and there are a variety of treatment options available for those who want support. This involves medication to slow the progression of symptoms, lifestyle changes and help or advice for family members.

People living with the condition can live active and independent lives for a long time, so it can be helpful to know what support and dementia care is available.

### **3. Younger people can be diagnosed with dementia**

Although most people with dementia are older (over 65), more than 40,000 individuals have an early-onset version of the condition. This is usually caused by Alzheimer's disease but is often misdiagnosed as something else like mental health problems because of their age.



### **4. It's more than just memory loss**

People often think dementia is just about memory loss, which can lead to misunderstandings about what is 'just old age' and what may be more serious. The symptoms a person experiences depends on what part of the brain is affected by the condition but there are a few that are common:

- Day-to-day memory loss
- Problems concentrating or planning
- Difficulty keeping up with conversations or finding the right word
- Problems judging distances
- Becoming confused about the day/date or about where they are
- Sudden mood changes

Experiencing one or more of the above symptoms doesn't mean you have dementia but it's best to consult a doctor as it may be a sign of something else.

Depression, chest and urinary tract infections, vitamin and thyroid deficiencies and brain tumours can all cause similar problems.

### **5. You're not alone**

It can be difficult discussing this sort of topic with a loved one, especially if they have been experiencing changes in mood or dislike visiting the doctor. There are lots of charities like the Alzheimer's Society that can help you talk to your relative about dementia and encourage them to see their GP. Reaching out to these support networks can make all the difference should you get a dementia diagnosis as they can advise you on the best type of care and treatment to get. Here at OSJCT our homes run regular events that offer support and guidance in many forms.