



# Practical tips for living well with dementia



Alzheimer National Helpline  
**1800 341 341**

This factsheet is for people who have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's or another cause of dementia. People with dementia helped to write this factsheet.

**This factsheet contains practical tips to help people to live well day-to-day. The tips are presented under five headings:**

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Practical tips to help people to live well day-to-day.

## 1. Ways to help your memory

If you find it difficult to remember things, there are many ways you can help yourself. Different things will help different people. You can choose the ones that suit you, some examples include:

### Follow a routine

Use routines and daily habits to help give your day a clear structure. This will help you remember what you need to do.

### Use lists or a diary

Make lists or keep a diary to help you keep track of your routine, for example the things you need to do, or have already done. Keep the lists or diary in a place that is easy to see or that you check each day – so that it becomes part of your daily routine.

### Keep things in the same place

Put things you use regularly in the same place where they are easy to see. This will help you to keep track of things like your:

- |                                 |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> keys   | <input type="checkbox"/> glasses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> wallet | <input type="checkbox"/> diary   |





## 1. Ways to help your memory

### Use a wall board or calendar

Many people find a wipe-clean board, blackboard or wall calendar in their kitchen helpful. You and your family can write down important things about a particular day, and you can then check what you need to do.

### Make to-do notes

Use sticky-backed notes to remind you about:

- 👁 what you have to do; or
- 👁 how to do something.

Put the notes near where you need them – for example, near an appliance or on a remote control.

### Put phone numbers where they are easy to find

Keep important phone numbers and a notepad and pen by the phone so that you can find them quickly and easily when you need them. You can also have a mobile phone set up with speed dial to make it easier to call certain people.

### Organise your medication

If you are taking medication, ask your pharmacist about pillboxes and medication organisers. These can help you keep track of your different medicines.

### Make a checklist of important things to do before going out and before going to bed

Keep a checklist of important things to do before you go out and before you go to bed like:

- 👁 make sure the cooker is turned off, and
- 👁 lock the front door.

Leave the checklist at the front door and beside your bed. Get into the habit of checking you have done everything on your checklist each time you leave the house and each night before you go to bed.

“I carry a notebook and diary with me every day. I write down things I need to do. I also write down little prompts to help me to remember the names of the people I will see that day.”

“Routine is important!”



## 2. Tips for communicating

Dementia can affect how you take part in conversations and how you express yourself. Some tips to help include:

### Tell people

If you have trouble finding words, tell people. They can help by making suggestions or they can give you more time to find the word yourself.

### Check with people

If you have trouble taking in what people are saying, check with them. Repeat back what you think they said. Some people write key words in a notebook to help them to keep track.

### Practise peoples' names

When meeting someone new, try to use their name several times during the conversation to help you remember it. If you forget, just ask. Afterwards, write down their name and practise it a few times before you are due to see them again.

### Make the environment work for you

If you are in a noisy or busy place, it can be harder to take part in a conversation. Ask if you can turn down background noise, such as a radio or television, or move to a quieter spot. If possible meet people in a place that suits you. If you find a new place difficult, arrive early to give yourself time to get to know the place or ask someone to stay with you while you are there.

### Know your limits

Stress and tiredness can make communication more difficult. Take a rest or ask for help if you need to. Plan for social events. Is there a quiet space you can go to during the event if you need to? Or can you take an extra rest beforehand?

“You are still the same person; you need to take things day by day.”

“Talk to people about it.”

“ Let people know you have it, don't let it be hidden.”



### 3. Ways to keep active and involved

Keep in touch with your friends and family. A diagnosis of dementia does not mean you have to give up everything. You should continue to do lots of the things you always did or you may decide to take up new hobbies or interests.

If you feel less confident, talk to your family and friends about how they can help. If you feel low in mood and are avoiding spending time with family and friends, talk to your doctor about how you are feeling.

**It is important to stay in touch with:**

- 👁 family
- 👁 friends
- 👁 your local community

Talk to The Alzheimer Society of Ireland to find out about people you can talk to in your area. We will also tell you about supports and services that other people with dementia and their families found helpful.

“Get out and try to meet people who can support you.”

“You can still lead an active life, physically and socially.”

“I find it is important to be part of a group, surrounded by other people and not feeling alone, you can share problems and experiences with them.”



## 4. How to stay healthy

Keeping as well as possible can help to manage your symptoms and help you to live well day-to-day. Talk to your doctor about the suggestions below. Research shows that they are good for you and for your brain health.

### Exercise regularly

Exercise doesn't have to be strenuous, and it should be something you enjoy. Good choices include:

- walking
- swimming
- dancing
- gardening

### Keep your brain active

Exercise your brain during your day to keep it stimulated. Pick things that you enjoy or that interests you, such as:

- word games and crosswords,
- number games and suduko,
- art and crafts,
- playing an instrument,
- hobbies such as woodwork, building models, cooking or card games, and
- join a club or volunteer in the community.

“I get great satisfaction from exercise and walking – keep walking!”



## 4. How to stay healthy

### **Eat healthily**

Eat a balanced diet with lots of fruit and vegetables. Limit the amount of food you eat that contains a lot of fat, salt and sugar. What is good for the heart is good for the brain.

### **Get health checks**

Have your blood pressure and cholesterol checked regularly.

### **Don't smoke**

Smoking clogs the blood vessels to the brain. Giving up smoking can help you to keep your brain healthy.

### **Drink moderately**

Drink alcohol in moderation.

### **Wind down**

Get plenty of sleep, rest and relaxation. Get to know your limits and when you need to take time out.

### **Deal with things one thing at a time**

Take your time and try to do one thing at a time. You may find you need to allow more time for some things.

### **For more information:**

- 👁️ Speak to your doctor or nurse
- 👁️ For tips on exercise and keeping active visit [www.getirelandactive.ie](http://www.getirelandactive.ie)
- 👁️ For tips on healthy eating visit [www.safefood.eu](http://www.safefood.eu)

“Give yourself time, I had to learn to do one thing at a time, slower maybe.”



## 5. Using equipment and technology

Equipment and technology can help you to live more independently. They can also help to provide support and reassurance and can reduce the risk of accidents.

### Equipment and technology can help you to:

- 👁 remember days, dates and time,
- 👁 find things,
- 👁 take your medication on time,
- 👁 detect if the gas is left on,
- 👁 detect if a tap is left running,
- 👁 raise an alarm, and
- 👁 let people know where you are if you become lost or disorientated.

### To find out more about how equipment and technology to help you, you can:

- 👁 **Speak** with an occupational therapist. Your doctor or public health nurse may be able to help you to arrange an appointment.
- 👁 **contact** Assist Ireland: call 0761 07 9200 or visit [www.assistireland.ie](http://www.assistireland.ie)
- 👁 **contact** our National Helpline: call 1800 341 341 or email [helpline@alzheimer.ie](mailto:helpline@alzheimer.ie)

“Bring your phone with you.”

“Your life changes around a bit once you get the right tools... that’s given me a good quality of life now...”



## For more information

Alzheimer National Helpline  
**1800 341 341**

You can also contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland's free and confidential Helpline for information about dementia, about areas such as:

- dementia,
- driving,
- legal and financial planning, and
- supports and services in your area.

Our Helpline is open Monday to Friday, 10 am to 5 pm and Saturday 10 am to 4 pm.

 **Call: 1800 341 341**

 **Email: [helpline@alzheimer.ie](mailto:helpline@alzheimer.ie)**

 **Visit: [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)**

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