

*Complete Guide* —  
— TO DEMENTIA  
*for Caregivers*



SENIOR  
LIFESTYLE

*your life, your style*



## INTRODUCTION

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For many adults, assisting an ailing parent or loved one is a challenging role reversal. Those challenges are compounded when they receive a dementia diagnosis.

This period in life can be confusing, frustrating, and exhausting for you, but imagine what it's like for your parent or loved one as their memory fades, and the simplest of tasks become challenges. Consider how frustrated he or she might feel as memory slips away.

On the other hand, this period can also be rewarding for you and your loved one. For some seniors with memory issues and their children, dementia may be a chance to come together, and spend more quality time together. This may be an opportunity to make the most of the time you have with your mom or dad.

Caring for a loved one with dementia can become a full-time job. It's important to understand the scope of dementia and Alzheimer's, so you can provide the best care. This eBook will help you prepare for your loved one's dementia care, so you can keep your loved one healthy and safe.



## *Early Warning Signs of Dementia*

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Many of the early warning signs of dementia are also common symptoms of aging. To the untrained eye, it may seem like a combination of “senior moments.” When several of those symptoms are combined, with rapid onset or increasing intensity, your loved one should be screened for dementia by a neurologist as soon as possible. Here is a list of the most common early warning signs that your loved one may be living with dementia:

# 01

## MEMORY LOSS AND CONFUSION

Occasional forgetfulness is a common part of aging. Misplacing car keys happens to most adults, along with missing appointments or other low-impact memory lapses. When a pattern of severe memory loss occurs, including forgetting the names of children, or important events, it may be a sign of a bigger problem.

# 02

## TROUBLE MAKING PLANS OR SOLVING PROBLEMS

If your loved one loses the ability of foresight, including making plans, or managing finances, it could be a sign of dementia. If bills and deadlines are frequently missed, or they lose the ability to follow a familiar recipe, dementia may be the cause.

# 03

## FORGETTING HOW TO DO NORMAL, EVERYDAY TASKS

Dementia affects procedural memory, which determines task accomplishment. A person with dementia or Alzheimer's may get distracted, or lose track of what they were doing. If your loved one starts having difficulty with simple acts of daily living, it could be a sign of dementia.

**WE KNOW ALZHEIMER'S IS THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF DEMENTIA.**

-Pam Belluck, The New York Times

# 44 MILLION

People worldwide have Alzheimer's globally

# 5.5M

Americans live  
with dementia.

# 04

## CHANGES IN VISION

Vision tends to slip as we get older. Usually, seniors become more myopic over time, or cataracts influence vision. When vision issues become more problematic than simple nearsightedness, it may be time to consult a professional. Dementia may affect your loved one's ability to drive, judge distance, or read.

# 05

## DIFFICULTY REMEMBERING WORDS OR FOLLOWING CONVERSATIONS

If your loved one has difficulty conversing, something may be the matter. You may notice expressions of confusion, and he or she may be unusually silent during group conversations. If your loved one loses their place while talking, you may be witnessing signs of dementia.

# 06

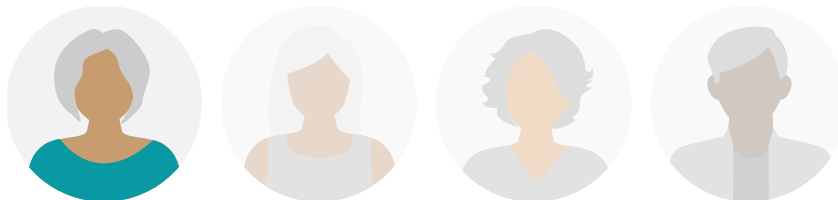
## BAD DECISION-MAKING AND POOR JUDGMENT

Dementia can affect the judgment part of your loved one's brain. If you notice uncharacteristic choices, or strange behavior, it may be time to consider a consultation with a neurologist.

### DID YOU KNOW?

-Alzheimer's Disease International

**ONLY 1 IN 4**



**WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED.**

# 07

## ABANDONING FRIENDS, HOBBIES, AND/OR WORK

Losing the ability to participate in conversation, procedural memory loss, and poor judgment may lead a senior with dementia to withdraw completely from their passions. If those meaningful hobbies, work, and relationships vanish from their life, dementia may be the root cause.

# 08

## UNUSUAL MOODINESS AND IRRITABILITY

Occasional moodiness can be a regular sign of aging. When it gets uncharacteristic and intense, there may be a bigger problem. Confusion and fear can lead to anger, and dementia's tendency to affect judgment can lead to unusual outbursts.

### DID YOU KNOW?

-Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures, the Alzheimer's Association



# ONLY 16%

of seniors receive regular cognitive assessments during routine health checkups.



### *The 7 Stages of Dementia*

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Your loved one may exhibit several symptoms for years before they need medical intervention and regular assistance. Even if you feel strongly about your loved one's symptoms, only a doctor can diagnose dementia. If you suspect that your parent or loved one's memory is starting to fail, schedule an appointment with a reputable neurologist right away.

Physicians and other dementia experts use a seven-stage scale to measure a patient's level of dementia symptoms. Below is a basic explanation of the seven stages of dementia:

- Stage 1: No impairment
- Stage 2: Very mild impairment
- Stage 3: Mild impairment
- Stage 4: Moderate impairment
- Stage 5: Moderately severe impairment
- Stage 6: Severe impairment
- Stage 7: Very severe impairment

# The 7 Stages of Dementia

## STAGE 1:

### NO IMPAIRMENT

In the first stage of dementia, the person appears mentally healthy and functioning. In fact, anyone without a dementia diagnosis or impairment falls into Stage 1.

## STAGE 3:

### MILD IMPAIRMENT

In the third stage, the person's close friends and family members will notice a slight cognitive decline. However, a person at this stage can still live a normal life, and meet most of their own daily needs. Increased forgetfulness, struggling to remember words, and inability to concentrate are a few common symptoms of a person in Stage 3.

## STAGE 5:

### MODERATELY SEVERE IMPAIRMENT

In the fifth stage, the person will need regular help with their daily activities. In Stage 5, the person may still be able to live independently, but with some assistance. Increased memory loss and confusion will make managing their medications and routines a challenge.

## STAGE 7:

### VERY SEVERE IMPAIRMENT

In the last stage of dementia, the person will lose the ability to speak, smile, eat, or even walk. A person experiencing late-stage dementia will no longer have awareness of his or her surroundings. He will be fully dependent on others for all of his or her needs, including nourishment, bathing, and toileting. Because of the level of care necessary, the families of late-stage dementia patients often turn to professional help to get through this difficult time.

## STAGE 2:

### VERY MILD IMPAIRMENT

In the second stage, the person exhibits some normal signs of aging. For example, your loved one may misplace his or her glasses, but can quickly recover them. A person in Stage 2 would not be diagnosed with dementia.

## STAGE 4:

### MODERATE IMPAIRMENT

In the fourth stage, the person will have a hard time completing familiar tasks. For example, they may lose the ability to cook a meal, and their short-term memory may start to fail. Incontinence and avoiding socialization are common in Stage 4. At this point, a doctor can detect signs of cognitive decline through a patient exam.

## STAGE 6:

### SEVERE IMPAIRMENT

In the sixth stage, the person will need a lot of help with routine daily tasks, such as getting dressed and using the toilet. As your loved one experiences an increasing mental decline, he or she may wander off and become lost. He may recognize loved ones, but not be able to remember their names. Due to changes in his sleep patterns and the possibility of paranoia or hallucinations, living alone may become dangerous in Stage 6.





### *The Dangers and Hazards of Caregiving*

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As your loved one's dementia symptoms progress, you must take extra precautions to keep everyone in the house safe, including yourself. You may notice loss of balance or coordination. He or she will become confused and disoriented more easily. Your loved one's judgment may become impaired. For all of these reasons and more, you and all other caregivers must agree on how to restrict your loved one's activities, and find ways to keep him or her calm.

# 01

## THE HAZARD OF HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Kitchen knives, power tools, and dangerous chemicals are just a few household items that should be kept out of reach of your loved one. Store unloaded firearms in locked cabinets and safes. No matter how adept your loved one once was at shooting, allowing a dementia patient access to weapons is just not worth the risk. Due to dementia's impact on the brain, your loved one could mishandle the weapon and hurt someone. In the case of agitation or confusion, you cannot risk the possibility of a gun being used in anger. Aggressive behavior is rare with dementia patients, but it's just good practice to protect them and yourself from potential injury.

# 02

## WANDERING AND CONFUSION

Wandering is a common symptom of dementia. Six out of ten dementia patients will wander, due to disorientation and confusion. Dementia patients may forget their own address, feel the need to return to a once familiar place, such as a former workplace. Preventing your loved one from leaving on their own is a critical part of your job as their caregiver.

# 03

## PARANOIA OR AGITATION IN THE EVENING

Sundowner's syndrome is a condition where dementia patients become paranoid or agitated in the afternoon and evening hours. As the patient becomes increasingly fatigued and frustrated throughout the day, these feelings can culminate in irritability and fear later in the day.

Some experts believe the lack of sunlight at night is a trigger, and that nighttime shadows in the house can be frightening. If your parent or loved one begins to exhibit sundowner's syndrome, ask their doctor to review their medications to better manage these symptoms. Discourage late-afternoon napping, and find ways to comfort and calm your loved one in the evening hours. Closing the curtains, turning on many lights, and playing familiar music at night can help.

### DID YOU KNOW?

More than  
**16.1 MILLION**  
Americans provide unpaid care for people with Alzheimer's or other dementias.



These caregivers provided an estimated  
**\$18.4B**  
HOURS OF CARE



VALUED AT OVER  
**\$232B**  
-Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures, the Alzheimer's Association



### *Signs of Caregiver Burnout*

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If you have been providing daily care for your loved one for some time, you may begin to feel burned out. It can be hard to tell the difference between depression and caregiver burnout, because the symptoms are so similar. You play a critical role in your loved one's life, but you must also take the time to care for your own health.

Here are some signs that you might be experiencing caregiver burnout:

# 01

## EXHAUSTION

Physical, emotional, and/or mental drain are common among caregivers. When you spend all of your time and energy caring for a loved one, it's easy to neglect acts of self-care. To keep up with your new demanding routine, it's important to eat a balanced diet, stay hydrated, and get regular exercise. If your loved one is able, try walking with them every day. If that means pushing them around the block in their wheelchair, the fresh air and sunshine could do a world of good for both of you.

# 02

## CHANGES IN SLEEP HABITS

Caring for a loved one with dementia may cause a drastic change in your sleep pattern. Whether it's a significant increase or decrease, your body is telling you something is wrong. Pay attention to the signals from your body, and give it what it needs.

# 03

## CHANGES IN APPETITE

You may experience changes in your appetite, perhaps accompanied by weight gain or loss. It can feel impossible to keep your own health and fitness on track when you are focused on keeping up with your loved one's care. Preparing and sharing healthy meals with your loved one is a good habit to embrace.

# 04

## HOPELESSNESS, DESPAIR, OR SADNESS

Caregivers may experience feelings of hopelessness, despair, or sadness. These feelings are often caused by unrealistic expectations for your loved one's condition. When you are providing care for a person with a progressive disease, it's important to remember that no matter how much love and effort you give, you must maintain realistic expectations of your loved one's condition. Taking the situation personally and considering it a failure on your part is not fair to you, and it can be emotionally exhausting.

# 05

## ILLNESS FREQUENCY

Care for a loved one with dementia may cause more frequent illnesses. Increased physical and emotional exertion paired with poor diet and lack of sleep could weaken your immune system. Overworked caregivers are much [more likely to get sick](#) than people working reasonable hours.

# 06

## WITHDRAWING FROM FRIENDS, HOBBIES, AND PASSIONS

Caregivers may withdraw from friends, hobbies, and other hobbies. Exhaustion can have many effects on mood, and could lead caregivers to abandon the pastimes that give their lives meaning. If you're never in the mood for things that once made you happy, it may be time to enlist some additional help.

# 07

## ESCALATING FRUSTRATION

When you're under intense pressure, your frustrations may escalate to a breaking point. Some caregivers even have thoughts of hurting themselves, or the person they care for. This is a huge indication that it's time to take a step back and take care of yourself.

The psychological toll of providing long-term dementia care can be devastating. If you feel like your frustration is getting out of hand, reach out for support before someone gets hurt. If there are no other family members to help out, a senior living community may be the healthiest choice for you and your loved one.

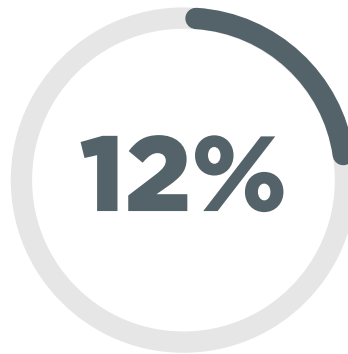
# 15.7M

Adult family caregivers care for someone who has Alzheimer's disease or other dementia.

-Alzheimer's Association. (2015).



Feel that these tasks are their personal responsibility because no one else can do it or because insurance will not pay for a professional caregiver.



Report that they are pressured to perform these tasks by the care receiver.



Report that they are pressured to perform these tasks by another family member.

- AARP and United Health Hospital Fund. (2012).



### *The Real Costs of Dementia Care*

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Many dementia patients prefer to stay in their own homes as long as possible. Remaining indoors can provide tremendous comfort to your loved one. Because dementia is a progressive neurological condition, eventually your loved one may require a level of care that exceeds what can be expected of you. Even trained home health aides have limits to what they can do for dementia patients. There is a good chance that you may eventually have to consider moving your loved one to a Memory Care community.

## IS MEMORY CARE COST-PROHIBITIVE?

Many think of retirement communities as cost-prohibitive, but it's important to understand the full scope of service and cost when considering a community. For example, combining utility bills and removing the costs of maintaining a home can actually make a retirement community a more affordable option than living alone.

At Senior Lifestyle, we ensure healthy meals for our residents, and ensure plenty of opportunities for socializing. For caregivers such as yourself, these communities can be a tremendous source of relief. You can rest easy knowing that your loved one is being cared for by Memory Care professionals. You can get back to your family, passions, and social life without the stress of being solely responsible for your loved one's health and safety.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The value of services provided by informal caregivers has steadily increased over the last decade, with an estimated economic value of

**\$470B**

in 2013, up from

**\$450B**

in 2019 and

**\$375B**

in 2007.

- AARP Public Policy Institute. (2015). Valuing the Invaluable: 2015 Update.]

At

**\$470B**

in 2013, the value of unpaid caregiving exceeded the value of paid home care and total Medicaid spending in the same year, and nearly matched the value of the sales of the world's largest company, Wal-Mart (\$477 billion).

- AARP Public Policy Institute. (2015). Valuing the Invaluable: 2015 Update.

The economic value of the care provided by unpaid caregivers of those with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias was

**\$217.7B**

in 2014.

- Alzheimer's Association. (2015). 2015 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures.





### *Rightsizing for Memory Care*

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Downsizing for the senior in your life (or rightsizing, as we like to call it) can be a huge, overwhelming task. Relocating has many crucial steps, and thinking of the event as one huge task can be daunting. The trick to tackling a massive undertaking is to divide the task into several small tasks. Organizing the downsize into manageable bits will make the process more stress-free for you, and the senior in your life.

# We've created this downsizing checklist, to make everyone's life easier.

## PLANNING:

- Clean and organize in stages
- Set a hard moving date
- Measure furniture
- Plan an estate sale
- Hire a moving company, or ask friends and family

## SORTING:

- Decide what is important to keep
- Decide what is sellable
- Decide what goes to friends and family
- Decide what is donated or thrown away

## PACKING:

- Get organized
- Identify fragile and important items
- Invite friends and family to help

## MOVING:

- If using friends and family, be sure to communicate
- Make sure you have the appropriate gear and muscle
- If using a moving company, get contracts in writing

## THE NEW LIFE:

- Update the address
- Unpack essentials, then bathroom, then bedroom
- Check in regularly

## DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP

Rightsizing a senior's residence is a challenge, and it may feel like too big of a task. If you feel out of your depth, or overwhelmed by the challenge of moving, sometimes you need an expert to help out. If you need additional assistance, use our interactive map to find senior living communities in your area. You can schedule an appointment to meet with Senior Lifestyle staff and talk through any concerns you may have with rightsizing

For information on ongoing care, and enriching the lives of seniors, be sure to read our [Senior Lifestyle Blog!](#)



### *Memory Care Community Options*

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Memory Care communities have a lot to offer your loved one. Many Memory Care communities are staffed by professionals who can bring out the best in your parent or partner. With proper care, this time can be fulfilling, enriching, and enjoyable.

Senior Lifestyle's Memory Care communities offer residents a wide range of amenities and services. Our award-winning embrace Memory Care program ensures top-tier personal care and safety for all residents. We provide a comforting rhythm, with daily routine that provide support and reassurance for your loved one. The embrace Memory Care program provides a holistic approach to improve your loved one's physical, emotional, and social health.

You don't have to handle this challenging time alone. If you want to learn more information, Senior Lifestyle is available to consult with you about your loved one's Memory Care needs. Complete our contact form today, and a team member will contact you shortly.

Learn more about [Senior Lifestyle](#), [contact us](#) to learn more or [find a community near you](#).