

Kingston Hospital

Information for patients with dementia and their carers

Living our values *everyday*



Kingston Hospital NHS Trust is committed to both improving the level of support and the hospital experience of patients with dementia and their carers. In this leaflet, there is a general overview about dementia, a description of Kingston Hospital's Forget-Me-Not Scheme, hospital tips for carers, and a contact number you may wish to use for additional information and support outside the hospital.

What is dementia?

The term 'dementia' describes a set of symptoms which include loss of memory, mood changes, and problems with communication and reasoning. These symptoms occur when the brain is damaged by certain diseases, including Alzheimer's disease and damage caused by a series of small strokes (vascular dementia).

Dementia is progressive, which means the symptoms will gradually get worse. How fast dementia progresses will depend on the individual person and what type of dementia they have. Each person is unique and will experience dementia in his/her own way. Often, the person's family and friends are more concerned about the symptoms than the person may be themselves.

Symptoms of dementia may include the following:

- Loss of memory – particularly short-term memory, for example forgetting what happened earlier in the day, not being able to recall conversations, being repetitive, or forgetting the way home from the shops. Long-term memory is usually still quite good.
- Mood changes – people with dementia may be withdrawn, sad, frightened or angry about what is happening to them.
- Communication problems – including problems finding the right words for things, for example being able to describe the function of an item instead of naming it.

In later stages of dementia, the person affected will have problems carrying out everyday tasks and will become increasingly dependent on other people.

Adapted from the Alzheimer's Society 2013 Factsheets

What causes dementia?

There are several diseases and conditions that result in dementia:

- Alzheimer's disease – This is the most common cause of dementia. During the course of the disease the chemistry and structure of the brain changes, leading to the death of brain cells. Problems of short-term memory are usually the first noticeable sign.
- Vascular dementia – If the oxygen supply to the brain fails due to vascular disease, brain cells are likely to die and this can cause the symptoms of vascular dementia. These symptoms can occur either suddenly, after a stroke, or over time through a series of small strokes.
- Dementia with Lewy bodies – This form of dementia gets its name from tiny abnormal structures that develop inside nerve cells. Their presence in the brain leads to the degeneration of brain tissue. Symptoms can include disorientation and hallucinations, as well as problems with planning, reasoning, and problem solving. Memory may be affected to a lesser degree. This form of dementia shares some characteristics with Parkinson's disease.
- Fronto-temporal dementia (including Pick's disease) – damage is usually focused in the front part of the brain. At first, personality and behaviour changes are the most obvious signs.
- There are many other conditions which may cause dementia.

Diagnosing dementia

It is very important to get a proper diagnosis. It is possible to be prescribed treatment for Alzheimer's disease. Whether you are someone with dementia or a carer, a diagnosis can help with preparing and planning for the future.

Dementia can be diagnosed by a doctor, who should rule out any illnesses that might have similar symptoms to dementia, including depression. The doctor may carry out a number of tests to check basic thinking processes and the ability to perform daily tasks. They may request further tests, such as a brain scan or a more in-depth assessment of memory, concentration and thinking skills.

Adapted from the Alzheimer's Society 2013 Factsheets

Kingston Hospital's Forget Me Not Scheme

The Forget Me Not Scheme makes sure that hospital staff recognise each person with known or suspected dementia so that they can provide special care. Components of the scheme are summarized briefly below.

Forget-Me-Not Sign : Patients with known or suspected dementia will have a forget-me-not symbol beside their name and/or above their beds to highlight to staff that these patients need special care.

8 Important Things About Me: This form summarizes information about each patient, such as his/her likes and dislikes, so that staff can provide effective care adapted to each patient's unique needs. A member of staff will fill out this form with the patient and his/her carer or relative. With permission, the form will be made visible to the staff who will be expected to use the information each time they provide care.

The Carer's Passport: This document recognises the value of the unique care, support and knowledge that a carer may provide for a patient with dementia during his/her hospital stay. It encourages our staff to value and support each person's carers, to welcome them as active members of the care team, and to support their visits during the day.

Carer's Survey: We collect feedback from patients and carers using this questionnaire. We greatly value all comments and will use them to strive to improve the experience of our patients and their carers. Please fill in a survey and return to the ward receptionist or member of staff.

Optional - This is Me (Alzheimer's Society): We recommend that each person with dementia fills in this leaflet. He/she may need some assistance from a carer or relative. It provides detailed information such as a person's likes and dislikes, hobbies, and biography. Keep the original document safe and make a copy to give to staff whenever you need to come to hospital.

Other – Medical Checklist: A doctor will use this detailed list to ensure that all aspects of medical care are checked daily.

Hospital Tips for Carers:

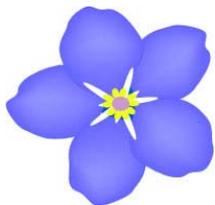
- **Use your Carer's Passport** to visit the patient in hospital and provide support any time. Your personal knowledge and experience with the patient is extremely valuable to the whole team.
- **Complete 8 Things About Me** with a member of staff.
- Ensure the patient has their **dentures, glasses, and hearing aids** available and in use as much as possible while in the hospital.
- **Personalise the patient's environment.** Familiar items such as photo albums, a favourite stuffed animal, a blanket from home, or activity they enjoy can alleviate anxiety commonly experienced in the unfamiliar hospital environment. Please consult staff first about items you wish to bring in.
- **Notify staff if you notice a change in the patient's usual behaviour.** For example, notify staff if the patient is not alert as usual, or displays behaviour that is not typical of the way they normally behave at home (e.g. hallucinating), or a mix of both.
- **Get connected** with your community for additional dementia information and support (see First Contact number below).

Community Contact

A member of staff at Age Concern Kingston will be pleased to direct you to services available to your borough.

Please dial **First Contact** at:

020 8408 8170



Carer's Survey

Are you the carer of a patient with dementia who is currently in hospital? Yes/No (please circle)

Have you felt adequately supported during the patient's stay in hospital? Yes/No (please circle)

Please explain what has affected your experience positively?

How could we improve our services to make you feel more supported?

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Thank you for your feedback. Please return to the ward staff. We will use your comments to help us improve services for patients with dementia.