

Sharing Hope Healthcare, Inc.

CARING FOR A LOVED ONE WITH DEMENTIA

A Practical Guide for Families &
Caregivers



Paris Staggars, MSN, RN

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A Practical Guide for Families &
Caregivers

Presented by

Sharing Hope Healthcare, Inc.

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“Extending compassion, fostering hope, and empowering individuals to live healthier and more fulfilling lives.”

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WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Caring for a loved one with dementia can feel overwhelming, confusing, and at times, isolating. You may find yourself asking questions like, *“What’s happening?”*, *“How do I help?”*, or *“Am I doing this right?”*

You are not alone.

This guide was created to provide you with practical tools, education, and encouragement as you navigate this journey. Whether your loved one has recently been diagnosed or you’ve been caregiving for some time, this resource will help you better understand dementia and how to provide compassionate, effective care.

At Sharing Hope Healthcare, we believe every individual deserves dignity, compassion, and quality care—right at home.

WHAT IS DEMENTIA?

Dementia is not a single disease. It is a general term used to describe a decline in memory, thinking, and reasoning skills that interferes with daily life.

There are several types of dementia, including:

- Alzheimer's disease – the most common form
- Vascular dementia – often related to stroke or reduced blood flow to the brain
- Lewy body dementia – associated with abnormal protein deposits in the brain
- Frontotemporal dementia – affects personality and behavior

Dementia affects each person differently, but it is progressive, meaning symptoms worsen over time.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Recognizing early signs can help you seek support sooner.

Common warning signs include:

- Memory loss that disrupts daily life
- Confusion with time or place
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks
- Trouble finding the right words
- Poor judgment or decision-making
- Changes in mood or personality
- Withdrawal from social activities

If you notice several of these signs, it may be time to speak with a healthcare provider.

STAGES OF DEMENTIA

Dementia typically progresses in stages:

Early Stage (Mild):

- Forgetfulness
- Misplacing items
- Difficulty with planning or organization

Middle Stage (Moderate):

- Increased confusion
- Difficulty recognizing people
- Changes in behavior
- Need for help with daily activities

Late Stage (Severe):

- Limited communication
- Significant memory loss
- Full dependence on caregivers

Understanding these stages helps you prepare for changing care needs.

CAUSES & RISK FACTORS

While the exact cause depends on the type of dementia, several risk factors increase the likelihood:

- Aging (most significant risk factor)
- Family history and genetics
- High blood pressure and heart disease
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Lack of physical activity
- Poor diet

Healthy lifestyle choices may help reduce risk or slow progression.

GETTING A DIAGNOSIS

An early diagnosis is important. It allows for better planning, treatment, and support.

A healthcare provider may:

- Review medical history
- Perform memory and cognitive tests
- Order blood tests or brain imaging

Specialists such as neurologists or geriatric doctors may also be involved. If you have concerns, don't wait—early action matters.

TREATMENT & MANAGEMENT

There is currently no cure for dementia, but treatment can help manage symptoms and improve quality of life.

Treatment options may include:

- Medications to support memory and cognition
- Therapy to improve daily functioning
- Structured routines
- Supportive care

Consistency and routine are key in helping individuals feel safe and secure.

DAILY CAREGIVING BASICS

As dementia progresses, your loved one may need help with daily activities such as:

- Bathing and personal hygiene
- Dressing
- Eating and hydration
- Medication reminders
- Mobility and safety

Approach each task with patience and compassion. Small adjustments can make a big difference.

COMMUNICATION TIPS

Communication can become challenging, but these strategies help:

DO:

Speak slowly and clearly

Use simple words and short sentences

Maintain eye contact

Be calm and reassuring

DON'T:

✗ Argue or correct harshly

✗ Rush the conversation

✗ Overwhelm with too many choices

Remember, it's not just what you say—it's how you say it.

MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

Behavior changes are common in dementia.

You may notice:

- Agitation
- Wandering
- Aggression
- Sundowning (increased confusion in the evening)

Helpful strategies:

- Stay calm and patient
- Redirect attention
- Identify triggers (hunger, fatigue, discomfort)
- Maintain a routine

Behavior is often a form of communication.

SAFETY AT HOME

Creating a safe environment is essential.

Tips include:

- Remove tripping hazards
- Install grab bars and handrails
- Keep medications secured
- Lock or monitor doors if wandering is a concern
- Ensure proper lighting

Safety helps prevent injuries and provides peace of mind.

NUTRITION & HYDRATION

Proper nutrition supports overall health.

Tips:

- Offer simple, balanced meals
- Cut food into easy-to-eat portions
- Encourage regular hydration
- Watch for weight loss or dehydration

Finger foods can be helpful in later stages.

SELF-CARE FOR CAREGIVERS

You cannot pour from an empty cup.

Signs of caregiver burnout:

- Constant fatigue
- Stress or irritability
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Neglecting your own needs

Take time to:

- Rest
- Ask for help
- Talk to someone you trust
- Take breaks when possible

Your health matters too.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

It may be time to seek additional support if:

- Care needs become too demanding
- Safety is a concern
- You feel physically or emotionally exhausted
- Your loved one requires more supervision

Getting help is not a failure—it's an act of love.

HOW SHARING HOPE HEALTHCARE CAN HELP

At Sharing Hope Healthcare, we provide compassionate, reliable support to families just like yours.

Our services include:

- In-home care assistance
- Short distance errands
- Medication reminders
- Companionship
- Respite care for caregivers

We are committed to helping your loved one remain safe, comfortable, and cared for at home.

Contact us today to learn how we can support your family.

RESOURCES & SUPPORT

You don't have to do this alone.

Helpful resources include:

- Alzheimer's Association (24/7 Helpline: 800-272-3900)
- Local caregiver support groups
- Community health organizations
- Faith-based and community programs

Support is available—reach out.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is dementia a normal part of aging?

No. While aging increases risk, dementia is not a normal part of aging.

Can dementia be prevented?

There is no guaranteed prevention, but a healthy lifestyle may reduce risk.

Is dementia hereditary?

Some types have a genetic component, but most cases are not directly inherited.

When should I consider home care?

When daily tasks become difficult or safety becomes a concern.

FINAL NOTE...

Caring for a loved one with dementia is a journey filled with challenges—but also moments of connection, love, and purpose.

Remember:

You are doing the best you can.

And you don't have to do it alone.

Sharing Hope Healthcare is here to support you every step of the way.

Call us today: (843) 355-HOPE (4673)

Visit us: www.sharinghopehc.org

Compassion. Care. Community.