

Dementia

What it is? What is dementia?

Dementia is a term used to describe a group of related symptoms associated with the overall decline of the brain's function.

There are over 100 different types of dementia. The most common types are Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia and dementia with Lewy bodies.

Dementia can cause difficulties in all or some of the following areas:-

- Memory
- Orientation
- Insight
- Attention and concentration
- Processing
- Motivation
- Personality/behavioural changes
- Emotional changes (e.g. anxiety, depression)
- Language and understanding
- Swallowing (in the later stages)

How can dementia affect swallowing?

Swallowing difficulties in dementia can include:

- A reduced awareness of food in the mouth – this can impact on the amount of food taken (e.g. they may 'cram' foods) and/or may have residue in the mouth after swallowing that they may not be aware of.
- Difficulties chewing food
- Difficulty initiating a swallow
- Delayed swallow reflex

- Coughing or choking on food, drink or saliva
- If food/drink 'goes down the wrong way', this can lead to chest infections.

How can Speech and Language Therapy help?

The Speech and Language Therapist can offer advice regarding food/drink texture modification, to reduce the risk of the above difficulties, and to advise as to any feeding strategies.

If you wish to know more information about dementia and support available in your area, please visit the Dementia UK or Alzheimer's Society websites (details on back of leaflet).

How can it affect communication?

Communication difficulties can vary, depending on the type of dementia. Language skills can also vary across the course of a day. The person with dementia may:

- Become increasingly distracted by what is going on around them and find it hard to focus on what they are saying
- Have difficulties understanding what is said
- Have problems finding the words that they want to say, especially names

How can Speech and Language Therapy help?

A Speech and Language Therapist can help a person with dementia to make the most of the abilities they still have.

Communication skill assessment can be implemented in order to provide strategies to aid day-to-day functioning and to give advice and support to the individual, relatives, carers and other professionals.

How to contact us

Speech and Language Therapy Departments Office hours: Monday-Friday 9am - 4.30pm

University Hospital of North
Durham

Telephone: 0191 3332591

Darlington Memorial Hospital

Telephone: 01325 743152

Useful contacts

Alzheimer's Society

Provides information and support for those living with and caring for people with all types of dementia

Devon House London

E1W 1LB

Tel: 020 7423 3500

Dementia UK

Provides information and advice for those living with and caring for people with dementia including "Uniting Carers" – a network of carers designed to raise awareness and increase understanding of dementia

6 Camden High Street London NW1 0JH

Tel: 020 7874 7200

Website: www.dementiauk.org

Contact details



Central Appointments Bureau
Speech & Language Therapy
Bishop Auckland General Hospital
Cockton Hill Road
Bishop Auckland
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Tel: 01388 455200

Please help us:

We need your comments, concerns complaints and compliments to deliver the best service possible. Please let us know by speaking to a member of our staff. We learn from your feedback and use the information to improve and develop our services.

If you would like to talk to someone outside the service contact the **Patient Experience Team** on **0800 783 5774**, or email cdda-tr.PatientExperienceCDDFT@nhs.net.

We can make this information available in Braille, large print, audio or other languages on request.

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