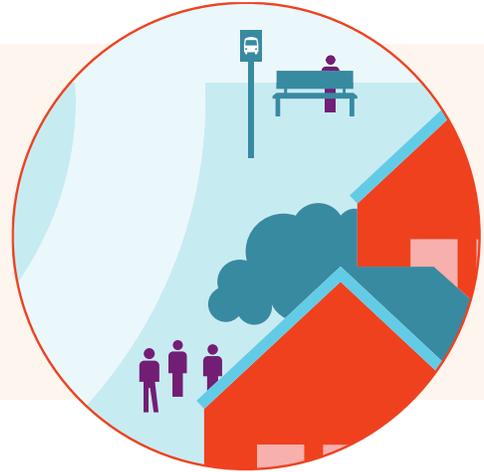


Neighbors and Community Members

Dementia-friendly communities are vital in helping people live well with dementia and remain a part of their community. While every part of the community has a unique role in meaningfully supporting people living with dementia and their care partners, some actions can be taken by all members of the community.

The following guide outlines actions we can all take to ensure our communities are supportive of persons living with dementia.



What is Dementia?

Dementia is an overall term that describes a wide range of symptoms associated with a decline in memory or other thinking skills severe enough to reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities. Dementia has many causes. Alzheimer's disease, the most common cause of dementia, is a disease of the brain that leads to problems with memory, thinking, and behavior. Alzheimer's and other dementias are not a normal part of aging.

Ready to implement dementia friendly practices?

Follow the steps:

1

Prepare

- Recognize the early signs of dementia.
- Be aware of local services that help people living with dementia and their care partners.
- Raise awareness by involving persons of all ages in dementia education.

2

Learn

- Learn dementia friendly language to reduce stigma.
- Involve and learn from people in your community who are affected by dementia.
- Identify dementia friendly practices, such as creating a dementia friendly environment.

3

Respond

- Educate others in the community about the signs of dementia.
- Encourage opportunities for people living with dementia and their care partners to connect with others.
- Commit to a dementia friendly action- no matter how big or small every action counts!

Early Signs of Dementia

- Memory loss that disrupts daily life
- Challenges in planning or solving problems
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, work or leisure
- Confusion with time or place
- Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships
- New problems with words in speaking or writing
- Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
- Decreased or poor judgment
- Withdrawal from work or social activities
- Changes in mood and personality

Dementia-Friendly Communication

- Treat the person with dignity and respect.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Use a gentle and relaxed tone.
- Use shorter simple sentences, and ask one question at a time.
- Avoid arguing with or embarrassing the person.
- Encourage nonverbal communication.
- Patiently wait for a response while the person takes time to process what you said, about 20 seconds.
- Approach the person slowly and from the front, never from behind so they are less likely to be surprised or startled.
- Be aware of your body language: smile and make eye contact at eye-level.
- Seek to understand the person's reality and feelings.
- Apologize and redirect to another environment or topic as needed.

Spread Dementia Friendly Principles

- Partner with advocacy groups or state agencies to learn more about, follow, and encourage dementia friendly practices.
- Share learnings and experiences with others to spread best practices to promote dementia friendly principles.
- Work to break down the stigma of dementia by increasing awareness and understanding of dementia within the community.

Benefits of Early Detection and Diagnosis

- An opportunity to prioritize your health.
- Allows time to make decisions and plan for the future.
- An opportunity to participate in clinical trials.
- Potential to reduce future financial costs.
- Opportunity to maximize your time with family and access resources and support programs.

Resources

- Dementia Friends Pennsylvania - <https://www.dementiafriendspa.org/>
- Dementia Friendly America - <https://www.dfamerica.org/>
- Alzheimer's Association - <https://www.alz.org/>
- Alzheimer's Disease International - <https://www.alzint.org/u/dfc-principles.pdf>
- AARP - [Better Together: Age-Friendly and Dementia Friendly Communities](#)