

People with dementia want to live autonomously for as long as possible in their usual environment. As a result of their disease they have difficulties with orientation and handling everyday tasks. Therefore it is possible that you notice a person affected by dementia through their behaviour. You can contribute to the inclusion of people with dementia if you are attentive and offer support.

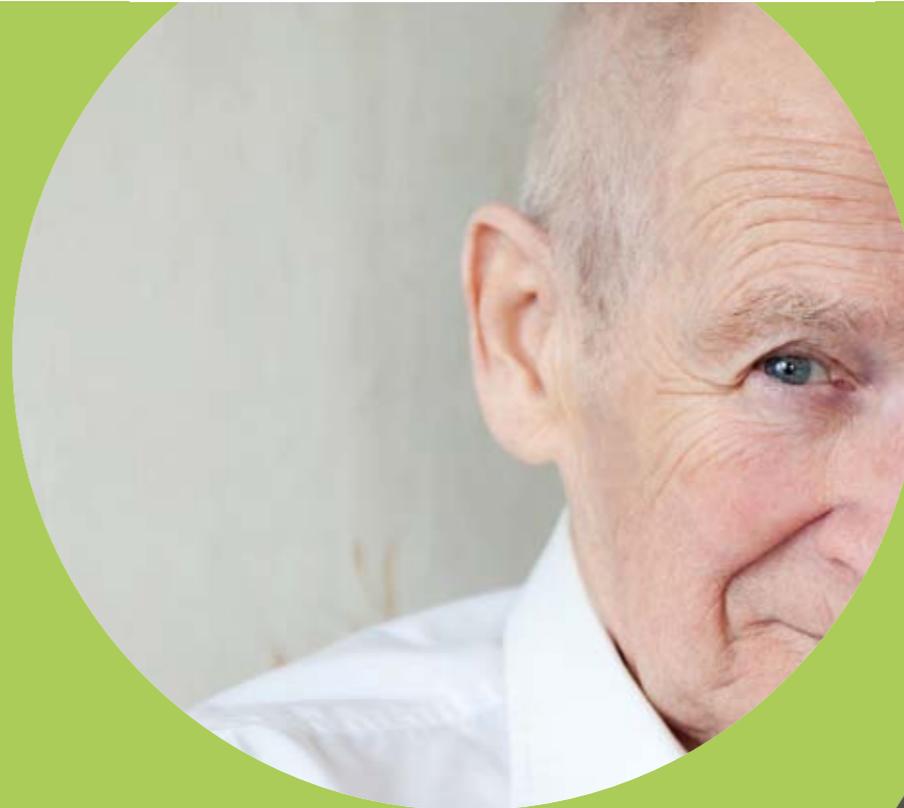
Some useful hints

- Approach a person from the front.
- Listen carefully, establish eye contact.
- Avoid rushed conversation, start with the most important message.
- Use simple sentences, talk slowly.
- Ask questions that can be answered with yes or no.
- Help to fill in missing words.
- Take the problems and anxieties of a person with dementia seriously.
- Demonstrate understanding and try to reassure.
- Do not contradict statements or stories that are incomprehensible.
- Do not take reproaches personally, stay calm.
- Observe the person attentively, and intervene if it is necessary to protect the person with dementia or other people.

What else can you do?

If possible, contact relatives or loved ones and discuss practical solutions for specific situations. Consider the needs of the person with dementia, but also the needs of others.

You can get advice from the Swiss Alzheimer-Hotline by calling **024 426 06 06** as well as the Canton Chapters of the Swiss Alzheimer's Association. You can find the Canton Chapter contacts and other useful information on **www.alz.ch**.



People with dementia – our fellow citizens



Alzheimer's Association Switzerland

Rue des Pêcheurs 8E
1400 Yverdon-les-Bains
Tel. 024 426 20 00
info@alz.ch
www.alz.ch
Swiss Alzheimer-Hotline 024 426 06 06
Monday from 8:00-19:00
Tuesday to Friday from 8:00-12:00
and 14:00-17:00

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Everyday interactions with people who have dementia

In your private or professional life you may interact with people with dementia . It is important to understand the effects of dementia in order to be able to offer the right kind of help for people with dementia. This can avoid difficulties and misunderstandings. This brochure contains general information and practical hints for everyday life.

Dementia is a disease that affects several brain functions. In most forms of dementia, memory is impaired, together with at least one other area, such as language, behaviour, recognizing people or objects, planning and organizing everyday life.

Potential signs

A person with dementia

- may have learning or remembering new things,
- may have difficulties with language,
- may not find the right words,
- may not recognize things, people or places,
- may have difficulties handling money,
- may not be able to do tasks that previously were easy
- may have difficulties planning and organizing everyday life,
- may have problems orienting in time and space,
- may not dress according to time of day or season,
- may neglect personal appearance and hygiene,
- may act or decide in unusual ways,
- may withdraw or lack drive.



Disease stages

Dementia can be categorized in three stages: "mild", "moderate" or "severe".

Signs of **mild dementia** are

- forgetting current events or new information,
- depression and mood fluctuations,
- impairment of orientation in time and space,
- difficulties mastering everyday life.

In this stage, people with dementia need ad-hoc support.

Signs of **moderate dementia** are

- restlessness and agitation,
- aggression and rage, overreactions and panic,
- delusions and hallucinations,
- mistrust, running off.

In this stage, people with dementia need daily support.

Signs of **severe dementia** are

- massive decline of intellectual capabilities,
- loss of speech,
- progressive mobility impairment,
- incontinence.

In this stage, people with dementia are likely to be heavily dependent.



Prevalence and causes

In Switzerland, there are more than 116 000 people with dementia*.

Dementia can have many causes. Age plays an important role: Before 60, the risk of dementia is very low, but then doubles more or less for every 5 years of life. Among people between 70-79 years old, approx. 5% will develop dementia, among people between 80-89 years old, approximately 16% will develop the disease, and a third of people over 90 are affected. The most common forms of dementia are Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia. Dementia cannot be cured yet, but symptoms can be treated.

* Population statistics 2013 and key data Alzheimer Association Switzerland