

**Dementia is not a disease but a collection of symptoms that result from damage to the brain. These symptoms can be caused by a number of conditions, the most common being Alzheimer's disease and multi infarct dementia.**

Common symptoms include: memory loss, difficulties performing tasks which require organisation and planning, confusion in unfamiliar environments, difficulty finding the right words, difficulty with numbers and money, depression and changes in personality.

## **Why should I attend my dementia review?**

Although dementia is progressive, early symptoms are often mild and may get worse only very gradually. The speed at which symptoms get worse and the way that they develop will depend on the cause of the person's dementia, their overall health and their circumstances. The review appointment is a physical health check to identify any conditions that can be treated that may be contributing to your dementia. It is also an opportunity to make sure you are claiming the appropriate financial support and are aware of the various agencies that can help you. **We ask anyone living with you or caring for you to attend the appointment with you, as they may also need advice and support and they can help tell the nurse about any problems you are having**

## **What will happen at my appointment?**

The nurse will discuss your condition with you and ask specific questions to find out if you are having any problems. She will ask about your lifestyle and your medication and check your height and weight, along with your blood pressure. She will also perform some blood tests. She will then be able to advise you about any changes she would recommend. If needed, she will refer you to a doctor for further review.

## **What lifestyle changes will help me?**

- Try to maintain a good social life
- Continue enjoying your hobbies – keep active and occupied
- Try to sleep well – keep a regular bedtime and avoid caffeine and alcohol
- Eat a healthy diet
- Increase your regular exercise if needed. Advice can be obtained from [www.prescription4exercise.com](http://www.prescription4exercise.com)
- Reduce your alcohol intake to 14 units a week for women, and 21 units a week for men. For help and support contact 0300 555 5999 or [www.bdaat.co.uk](http://www.bdaat.co.uk)

## **What tests may help me?**

- Diabetes screen – diabetes is a risk factor for vascular dementia.
- Cholesterol measurement – too much cholesterol increases the risk of vascular dementia.
- Blood pressure measurement – high blood pressure is a risk factor for vascular dementia
- Routine blood tests may pick up abnormalities that could be contributing to your symptoms

## **What medication may help me?**

- There are some medications used to help the symptoms of dementia. If appropriate these will be prescribed by a specialist.
- You may benefit from medication to lower your blood pressure and cholesterol.

## **Useful contacts for care givers**

- Admiral Nurses are specialist dementia nurses who can offer advice – [www.dementiauk.org](http://www.dementiauk.org). Helpline 0845 257 9406
- Alzheimer Society – [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk). Helpline 0300 222 11 22
- Practical help and support for care givers - [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org) - Helpline 0300 123 1053.

**Further information on dementia and being a carer can be found at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**