



Caregiver Fact Sheet

Getting an Accurate Diagnosis

Dementia is more than memory problems. It's changes in memory, thinking, and behavior that interfere with daily activities.

If your person is having problems doing usual activities or is acting in a way that's different, talk to his or her doctor. Be specific about changes you've noticed.

Your doctor will usually start by taking a history, doing a physical exam, and ordering blood work to see if medical problems like infections, dehydration, medication interactions, vitamin or nutritional deficiencies, or high or low blood sugar may be causing the changes. The doctor may also ask a few questions to see if your person is depressed and/or having problems with memory or thinking.

If the doctor suspects that changes are caused by dementia, he or she may do additional testing, like more extensive cognitive testing or brain imaging (e.g., CT, MRI, or PET scans). Some primary doctors are able to coordinate these tests and interpret the results.

Others will make referrals to specialists like neurologists and geriatricians. Neurologists are trained to deal with conditions of the brain. Geriatricians are trained to deal with common conditions affecting older adults.

If your person has traditional Medicare, you can find a list of neurologists and geriatricians at: <https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare/>. If your person has Medicare Advantage, contact the Advantage plan to get a list of specialists who are in its network.

You can get more information about dementia and related resources at:

- <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/alzheimers-disease>
- [NCTCOG - Resources for People with Memory Loss & Family Caregivers](#)
- [NCTCOG - Training to Understand Dementia & Provide Better Care](#)



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