



When to seek a medical opinion

How many times have you gone upstairs to fetch something and forgotten what it was you wanted? It's no wonder with the busy lives we lead today if we become distracted, preoccupied or simply overloaded with things to remember and priorities to juggle, but how can you distinguish between a harmless lapse of memory and an underlying medical condition like Dementia?

There are different types of Dementia and these can cause a range of symptoms and changes in the behaviour or character of a person.

For example tasks or experiences which the person may have done without any concerns or hesitation may become a source of anxiety or agitation. You may notice the person gets frustrated, flustered or become aggressive when they would have not reacted in that way in the past. Shy people can become gregarious or act inappropriately. These changes can happen in abrupt noticeable steps, take the form of a gradual decline or be erratic with 'good days and bad days' over months or years.

This can make early diagnosis challenging and even when you do perhaps suspect Dementia it can be difficult broaching the subject with that person or arranging the next step – seeking professional medical advice or assessment.

At the mention of Dementia some may dismiss it as nonsense or it may cause distress or fear. There is no 'one approach to fit all' and only those carers, relatives or friends closest to that person will best know how to proceed.

There is increasingly more information and support available to offer people choice and enable them to make informed decisions about medical treatments, practical matters like finance and benefits, and planning of longer term care. Ultimately it will be a medical professional who will assess and confirm a diagnosis of Dementia but the burden of responsibility can rest heavily on those who want to do what's right and in the best interests of the one they love.

For those without anyone to help them, there are independent advocates who take on the role of a family member and provide impartial support.

What cannot be emphasised enough is that early diagnosis can make a significant difference to the quality of life of a person with Dementia. There are treatments which can slow down the progress and impact of the disease. Decisions about future care can be taken whilst the person with Dementia is able to consider and make informed choices and ensure their family and the medical professionals know their wishes.

Contact Waypoints Care Group on 01425 486 760 or visit www.waypoints-care.co.uk