

People experiencing symptoms of undiagnosed Alzheimer's disease or other dementias often experience fear, anger, and even denial. But delaying a diagnosis can lead to a host of issues. What can you say to help a loved one take steps toward getting a necessary diagnosis? **We hope this conversation guide can help.**

SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR

Memory loss is an obvious symptom of Alzheimer's and related dementias, but there are other signs to keep an eye out for:

- Planning or problem-solving challenges
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks
- Confusion with time or dates
- Trouble understanding images and special relationships
- New problems with words (speaking or writing)
- Misplacing things; inability to retrace steps
- Decreased or poor judgment (like with money or personal hygiene)
- Withdrawal from social activities, hobbies, or work
- Mood or personality changes

CONVERSATION TIPS



Remind your loved one that Alzheimer's is not the only possible cause for some of these symptoms. There are many forms of dementia that can cause memory loss, and even some non-dementia conditions that can lead to memory loss and confusion. You'll never know if your symptoms are reversible until you identify the cause.



Express your love. Let your loved one know how much you care about them, and that you're concerned about them. They may be willing to go see a doctor to reduce your worry.



Remind them about their Annual Wellness Visit. The AWV is an overall wellness exam that can include a cognitive screening. It's free to Medicare-eligible people over 65. You can help your loved one make their appointment and attend it without ever having to talk about memory loss, Alzheimer's, or dementia.



Listen. Be kind and supportive throughout your conversations. They'll be more likely to share their thoughts and fears, and to listen to you.



Break the larger issue into a smaller one. Instead of mentioning Alzheimer's, you could say, "I've noticed you've been forgetting names recently. Maybe we should talk to your Primary Care Physician."



Share the conversation. Your loved one might listen to a close friend more than an adult child or spouse. Consider sharing your concerns with other trusted people in your loved one's life and seeing if they're willing to have their own conversations.



Be pleasantly persistent. Your loved one may react negatively to your conversation about their health, and you may reach a point where it seems wisest to end the conversation for now. Don't be afraid to pick the conversation back up at a later time when the mood seems right.



Get creative. Dementia can impair judgment, so your well-reasoned conversation might not lead to your desired outcome. Consider going to lunch together, then remembering a doctor's appointment while you're out.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If your loved one is ready to get an accelerated, accurate diagnosis, the next step might be a referral to Georgia Memory Net for diagnosis and connection to community support. **Learn more about getting a referral to GMN at GaMemoryNet.org/patient/patient-referrals/**