

Next steps

1.5

ABOUT DEMENTIA

This Help Sheet describes the different services available for people diagnosed with dementia, their families and carers. These include specialised dementia services, health and home support services.

Caring for someone with dementia can be difficult, and at times feel a bit overwhelming. However there are many organisations that provide a range of services to help families and carers continue supporting people with dementia at home.

Getting the information you need

Finding out about dementia and the immediate help available is usually a priority soon after a diagnosis is made.

Alzheimer's Australia can help you learn what is happening, provide emotional support, information, education and counselling. Call the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**.

Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres around Australia provide information about the range of community care programs and services available to help people stay in their own homes. Call **1800 052 222** or visit www.commcarelink.health.gov.au

Commonwealth Carer Resource Centres provide carers with information and advice about their caring role and about relevant carer services and entitlements. Contact your closest Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre on **1800 242 636**.

Another useful source of information is the Carers Association. The Australian Government has published a Carer Information Kit which provides information about the support and services that are available to carers and offers practical assistance. A copy of the Carer Information Kit is available by contacting the Carers Association in each State and Territory or visiting www.carersaustralia.com.au

Support

Alzheimer's Australia can link people to a large number of support groups throughout Australia. Many people find comfort and practical assistance by attending these meetings with others who know what it is like to care for a person with dementia. Support groups bring together families, carers and friends of people with dementia under the guidance of a group facilitator. The facilitator is usually a health professional or someone with first hand experience of caring for a person with dementia.

'It helps to know you're not alone...listening to how others deal with similar problems...it makes me feel much better to know that there are other people with a similar caring role'

Counselling

Alzheimer's Australia provides a free specialist counselling service for people with dementia, their families and carers which aims to support and assist people throughout the course of the illness.

Contact the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**

Visit Alzheimer's Australia at www.alzheimers.org.au

Health Services

The family doctor will probably be the health professional providing on-going health care for the family and the person with dementia. It is important that family members and the doctor are able to communicate comfortably as this will be of great benefit to all concerned.

The Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) provides assistance to older people in determining their needs for home based supports or residential care. Health care workers such as geriatricians, social workers and occupational therapists work on the teams. You can contact your nearest ACAT by calling the number listed in the Age Page of your telephone directory.

There is a range of health services, including home nursing services, which are based on the assessed need of the person with dementia. The doctor or ACAT can help identify any that may be helpful.

Help is available for people with continence problems and their family and carers. The Continence Foundation of Australia can be contacted on **1800 330 066**.

Respite Care

Families and carers need to have regular breaks from caring. One way to do this is to arrange regular respite care for the person with dementia. There are various ways to take a break, including residential respite care for the person with dementia. Some agencies are able to provide flexible respite, which may be appropriate for people with younger onset dementia.

Respite care can also be arranged in the case of an emergency. Contact your local Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre on **1800 052 222** or visit **www.commcarelink.health.gov.au**

Home Support Service

Some of the most commonly used services for people with dementia who live at home include assistance with personal care, housework, meals and home maintenance.

The Independent Living Centre in each State and Territory offers a number of services designed to promote safe living. Advice is also available on home modifications.

Your doctor, local council or ACAT can put you in touch with these services. It is important to know where they are and what they can offer. This helps with forward planning. If not needed immediately they may be needed at some time in the future.

There are many other services available. Australian Government departments such as the Department of Veterans' Affairs, State Government departments and local governments all provide additional types of assistance.

Ask your doctor or contact Alzheimer's Australia for more information about assistance.

Further Information

Alzheimer's Australia offers support, information, education and counselling. Contact the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**.

For further information and to view other Help Sheets visit our web site at **www.alzheimers.org.au**