

## What is Dementia?

Dementia is a general term for a loss of memory and other thinking abilities that is serious enough to interfere with activities of daily life.

Dementia has many causes. Alzheimer's disease, the most common cause of dementia, is a disease of the brain that leads to problems with memory, thinking, and behavior. Alzheimer's and other dementias are not a normal part of aging.

## Taking Action

1 in 10 adults 65+ have dementia; the rate rises to 1 in 3 for those age 85+. Dementia Friendly Duluth is a local collaborative working to make our community more aware, informed, sensitive and supportive of people experiencing and caring for those with Alzheimer's and other forms of Dementia.

The Duluth Public Library is partnering with Dementia Friendly Duluth to increase knowledge of dementia and available resources across the community. Libraries are respected community institutions and vital to a dementia friendly community because they provide access to resources, services, and programs for people living with dementia and their families.

## What are Memory Kits?

Memory Kits are developed specifically for people with dementia, memory loss or cognitive impairment. They are intended to stimulate conversation or reminiscence with a person with cognitive issues.

Our kits include a collection of resources and items that allow users an opportunity to engage in conversation about their life experiences with the items.

## Stages of Disease

Alzheimer's disease typically progresses slowly in three general stages — mild (early stage), moderate (middle stage), and severe (late stage). Since Alzheimer's affects people in different ways, the timing and severity of dementia symptoms varies as each person progresses through the stages of Alzheimer's differently. While stages of the disease process are typically discussed with specific relation to Alzheimer's Disease, you may notice the symptoms and progression similar in the other types of dementia(s).

## Mild Alzheimer's Disease (early stage)

In the early stage of Alzheimer's, a person may function independently. He or she may still drive, work and be part of social activities. Despite this, the person may feel as if he or she is having memory lapses, such as forgetting familiar words or the location of everyday objects. Common difficulties include:

- Problems coming up with the right word or name
- Challenges performing tasks in social or work settings.
- Forgetting material that one has just read
- Losing or misplacing a valuable object
- Increasing trouble with planning or organizing

## Moderate Alzheimer's Disease (middle stage)

Moderate Alzheimer's is typically the longest stage and can last for many years. As the disease progresses, the person with Alzheimer's will require a greater level of care. During the moderate stage of Alzheimer's, the dementia symptoms are more pronounced. A person may have greater difficulty performing tasks, such as paying bills, but they may still remember significant details about their life. At this point, symptoms will be noticeable to others and may include:

- Forgetfulness of events or about one's own personal history
- Feeling moody or withdrawn, especially in socially or mentally challenging situations
- Confusion about where they are or what day it is
- The need for help choosing proper clothing for the season or the occasion
- Trouble controlling bladder and bowels in some individuals
- Changes in sleep patterns
- An increased risk of wandering and becoming lost

## Severe Alzheimer's Disease (Late Stage)

In the final stage of this disease, dementia symptoms are severe. Individuals lose the ability to respond to their environment, to carry on a conversation and, eventually, to control movement. They may still say words or phrases, but communicating pain becomes difficult. As memory and cognitive skills continue to worsen, significant personality changes may take place and individuals need extensive help with daily activities. At this stage, individuals may:

- Need round-the-clock assistance with daily activities and personal care
- Lose awareness of recent experiences as well as of their surroundings
- Experience changes in physical abilities, including the ability to walk, sit and, eventually, swallow
- Have increasing difficulty communicating