
BARATHAVEN

MEMORY CARE

What Should You Do After a Dementia Diagnosis?

A Step-by-Step Guide for Individuals and Their Families



A dementia diagnosis can feel overwhelming, both for the person experiencing memory loss and their families. It's understandably a moment often filled with uncertainty and a flood of emotions. If someone you love has been recently diagnosed with dementia, it's important to know that you are not alone on the journey ahead. There are proactive steps you can take to ensure your loved one receives the care, support, and meaningful lifestyle they deserve.

This guide is designed to walk you through the steps to take after a parent, family member, or anyone you love has received a dementia diagnosis. From understanding the types of dementia to exploring specialized care options, you will find valuable resources and insights to empower you on this journey.

First Things First: What is Dementia?

Dementia is not a single disease but rather an umbrella term used to describe a range of symptoms that affect memory, thinking, and social abilities severely enough to interfere with daily life. This decline in cognitive function can impact problem-solving, language skills, and even emotions or behaviors. While it is more common in older adults, dementia is not a natural part of aging and can affect and progress in individuals differently.



Did you know?

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, accounting for 60-80% of all cases. This is why many people mistakenly believe Alzheimer's is the only type of dementia, highlighting the importance of seeking a professional diagnosis.



Common Types of Dementia



Alzheimer's Disease

The most common type of dementia, Alzheimer's disease, is characterized by gradual memory loss and cognitive decline. It's associated with abnormal protein deposits in the brain, such as beta-amyloid plaques and tau tangles, which disrupt brain function over time.



Lewy Body Dementia (LBD)

Lewy body dementia results from abnormal protein deposits in the brain called Lewy bodies. These deposits can cause fluctuations in alertness, visual hallucinations, and movement difficulties similar to Parkinson's disease.



Vascular Dementia

This type of dementia is caused by reduced blood flow to the brain, such as what happens during a stroke, and leads to damaged blood vessels. Symptoms may include impaired judgment, difficulty concentrating, and slower mental processing.



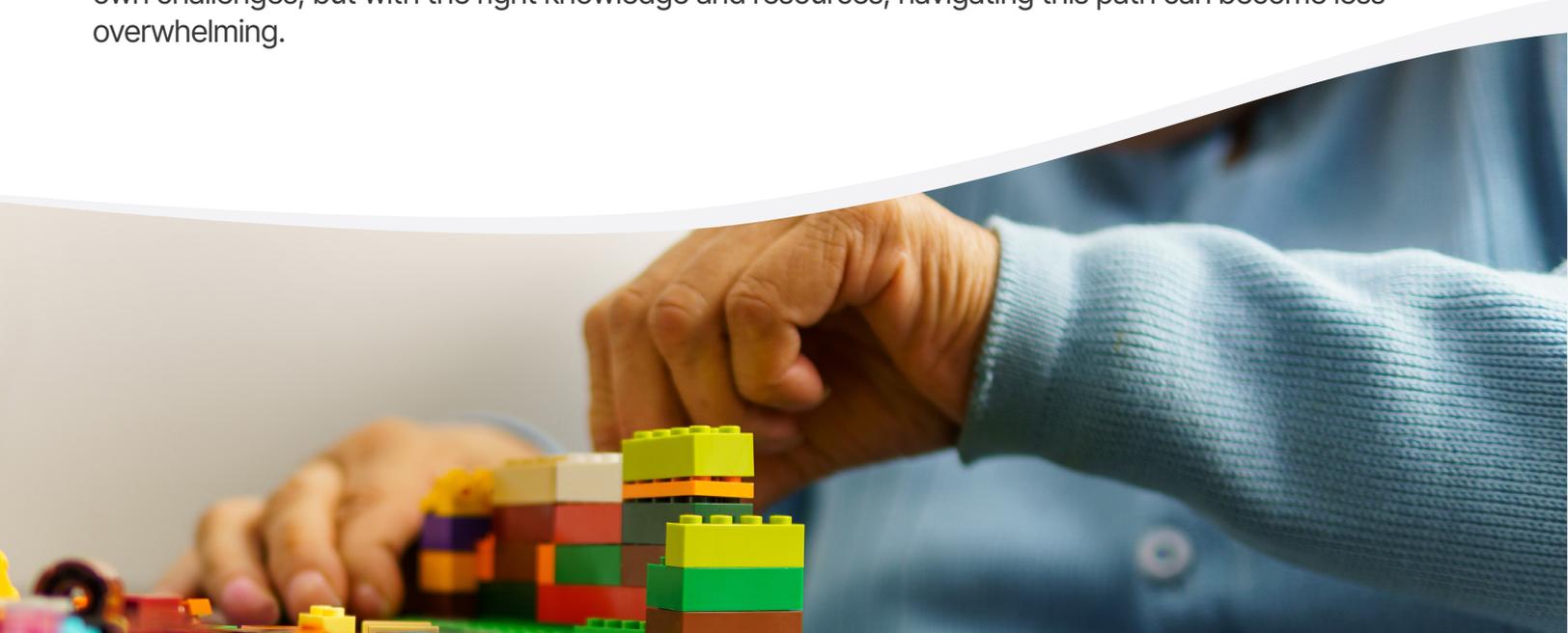
Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD)

FTD primarily affects the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain, which control behavior, personality, and language. This type often leads to changes in personality, impulsive actions, and difficulty with language skills.



Mixed Dementia

Mixed dementia is a combination of multiple types that affect a person simultaneously, such as Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia. Its symptoms can vary based on the underlying changes in the brain. Acknowledging the type of dementia your family member is experiencing is a fundamental first step in determining the best care strategies and support systems. Each type comes with its own challenges, but with the right knowledge and resources, navigating this path can become less overwhelming.

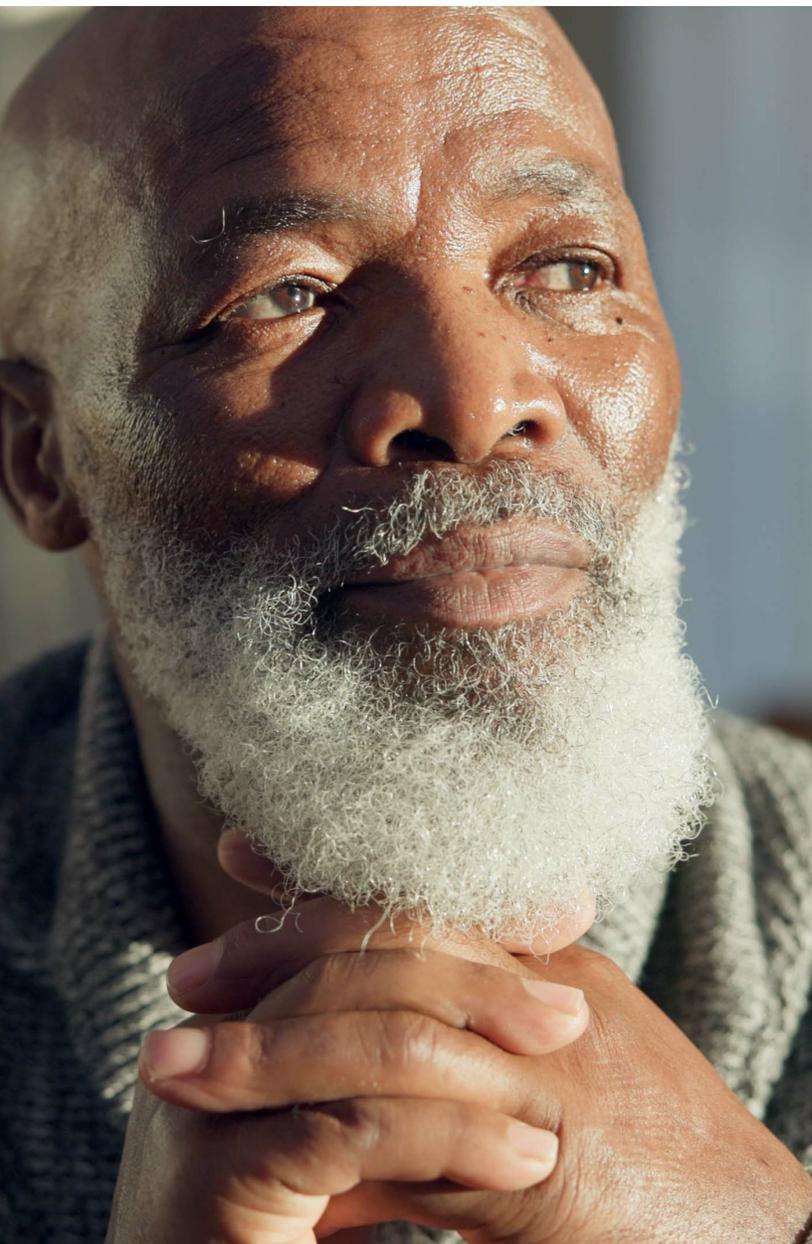


Why a Proactive Approach is Crucial

A dementia diagnosis doesn't have to mean life comes to a standstill. With a proactive approach, you can create a foundation of care that evolves with your family member's changing needs. Early action allows you to make important decisions together, ensuring their wishes and preferences are honored while planning for the future.

Proactively addressing the diagnosis can include steps like setting up healthcare and legal plans, researching caregiving options, and creating a safe, comfortable setting. It also means finding ways to maintain your family member's dignity and independence for as long as possible. Whether it's through meaningful programs, therapies, or supportive relationships, these efforts can enhance their lifestyle.

By acting quickly and thoughtfully, you're not just preparing for challenges—you're helping someone you love live a life with purpose, connection, and peace of mind. With the right balance of planning, resources, and emotional support, you can navigate this journey together, one step at a time.



Someone You Love Received a Dementia Diagnosis. Now What?

Step 1: Confirm the Diagnosis and Understand the Type of Dementia

After receiving a dementia diagnosis, it's crucial to confirm the findings with a specialist, such as a neurologist, geriatrician, or cognitive specialist. These professionals can conduct advanced tests, such as brain imaging or neuropsychological assessments, to determine the specific type of dementia (e.g., Alzheimer's, Lewy Body Dementia, Vascular Dementia, etc.).

Understanding the type of dementia is vital because each type progresses differently and may require unique treatment approaches. For example, Alzheimer's disease commonly progresses slowly, while Frontotemporal Dementia can lead to rapid personality changes. Specialists can also help explain the symptoms to watch for and recommend medications or therapies to manage the condition.



Step 2: Overcoming the Initial Shock and Overwhelming Emotions

Someone you love receiving a dementia diagnosis can feel like stepping into uncharted territory, leaving many unsure of what lies ahead. It's natural to experience a whirlwind of emotions, including confusion, sadness, anger, or even fear. These feelings may come and go or overlap, which is completely normal. Take a moment to remind yourself and your family that these emotions are valid and shared by countless others facing similar situations. Acknowledge the uncertainty, but also remember that you are not alone on this journey.

The first step to moving forward is acceptance, which opens the door to focusing on care and support. While thinking about the future may feel overwhelming, arming yourself with knowledge, resources, and practical steps can help ease the uncertainty. Start by seeking out trusted healthcare professionals and support networks who can guide you through the process and provide clarity in moments of doubt. Information, preparation, and the support of your community can provide comfort and a sense of control in what might feel like an unpredictable time.

Someone You Love Received a Dementia Diagnosis. Now What?

Step 3: *Create a Support Network*



Lean on Family and Close Friends

Start by informing family members and close friends of the diagnosis. Discuss the situation openly and assign roles based on individual strengths. For example, one family member might help with transportation to appointments, while another might focus on managing finances or cooking meals. This collective approach ensures that responsibilities are distributed and your loved one feels surrounded by people who care.



Join Community Support Groups

Local and online dementia support groups can be life-changing for caregivers and families. These groups connect you with others who face similar challenges, offering a sense of community and shared experience. For instance, one caregiver might share tips on managing difficult behaviors, while another may recommend local resources. Support groups often help reduce caregiver stress and provide emotional encouragement when situations become tough.

Step 4: *Legal and Financial Planning*



Establish Essential Legal Documents

Work with a qualified attorney to put key legal protections in place. Documents, such as a power of attorney (for both financial and healthcare decisions), allow a trusted individual to make decisions on behalf of the individual diagnosed with dementia. Advance healthcare directives outline preferences for medical treatments in the future, ensuring their wishes are respected even if they can no longer communicate.



Consider Long-Term Care Plans

Long-term care planning is essential for financial stability and peace of mind. Explore support options like memory care communities, and investigate costs early so you have a plan for covering future expenses. Planning ahead can prevent financial strain and ensure your family member receives the best care possible.



Step 5: Make Home Modifications to Ensure Safety and Comfort



Implement Safety Measures

Falls are a major safety risk for older adults, especially those living with dementia, as they may become disoriented or have difficulty navigating their home. To reduce these risks, start by installing grab bars in bathrooms, hallways, or any areas where extra support might be needed. For instance, place grab bars near the toilet, shower, and bathtub. Secure loose rugs with anti-slip mats or remove them altogether to prevent tripping. Optimize lighting by ensuring all areas of the home, including staircases and corners, are well-lit—motion-sensor lights can be especially helpful at night. Additionally, consider installing locks or alarms on doors to prevent wandering, and keep hazardous items like cleaning supplies and sharp objects out of reach.



Promote Familiarity and Comfort

A familiar setting can help reduce confusion and anxiety for someone with dementia. Arrange furniture and decor in a way that mimics how they've always known their space to look. For example, keep their bedside table in the same spot as it's always been, with familiar items like a favorite book or family photo. Avoid rearranging furniture unnecessarily, as this can cause unnecessary stress or confusion. Adding personal touches, like soft blankets, favorite colors, or family photos, can bring comfort and make the home feel more welcoming. For individuals who are used to specific scents or sounds, diffuse a familiar fragrance or play gentle background music to create a calming space.

Step 6: Develop a Routine and Focus on Holistic Care



Strike the Right Balance

Having a consistent daily routine provides individuals with dementia with stability and security. Waking up, eating meals, and performing specific tasks at set times each day can help reduce confusion. However, it's important to allow flexibility based on their needs and energy levels. Encouraging independence as much as possible, such as letting them choose their outfit for the day or helping with small household tasks like folding towels, can help instill a sense of purpose. At the same time, provide gentle supervision to ensure safety. Striking this balance fosters confidence and helps your family member feel more in control, while minimizing stress.



Explore Engagement and Therapy Opportunities

Engaging ventures and therapies can significantly improve the lifestyles of individuals with dementia. Art therapy, for example, allows them to express their emotions creatively through painting or drawing, even if words become difficult. Music therapy can evoke positive memories, so playing familiar or favorite songs often leads to moments of joy and connection. Gentle physical exercises like chair yoga or short walks can help maintain mobility and boost mood. Consider setting up simple hobbies, such as puzzles, gardening, or sorting tasks, which provide cognitive stimulation while fostering a sense of accomplishment. For example, helping pot plants or sorting colored buttons can be both therapeutic and engaging.

Step 7: Explore Memory Care Options



Understand the Value of Memory Care

When at-home care no longer seems like the right option, specialized memory care communities provide the structured support individuals with dementia need. These neighborhoods are specifically designed for individuals experiencing cognitive decline, featuring secure settings to prevent wandering, trained team members in dementia care, and tailored programs to meet individual needs.

For example, our dementia care community in Dardenne Prairie, MO, includes wellness programs that enhance residents' physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Our thoughtfully designed spaces foster a sense of safety and comfort, and our team members are dedicated to providing 24/7 support, which all help give families peace of mind.



When to Seek Memory Care

It's important to recognize the signs that memory care may be the best option for someone you love. Indicators include increased wandering, where they may attempt to leave the home unsafely; difficulty managing medical needs, such as skipping medication or missing doctor appointments; and significant behavioral changes, like agitation or aggression.

Being mindful of these behaviors helps ensure your family member transitions to a memory care neighborhood at the right time, avoiding a crisis situation. For instance, if you notice that it's getting harder for your family member to recognize their surroundings or they frequently get lost, it may be time to explore memory care options. These communities can provide the specialized attention they need to thrive in a safe and nurturing space.

How Barathaven Memory Care Can Help

At Barathaven Memory Care, we believe that every individual deserves an enriching and dignified life, regardless of cognitive challenges. Our memory care community in Dardenne Prairie, MO, offers specialized programs thoughtfully created to support older adults and their families during this important time.





Valeo Signature Programs

Valeo™ by AgeWell Solvere, inspired by the Latin word for “to thrive,” is a group of thoughtfully crafted programs that support individuals with cognitive impairments. These programs create meaningful opportunities for residents to feel valued, purposeful, and fulfilled. By nurturing physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being, Valeo™ empowers residents to lead enriched lives. Through engaging pursuits like art, music therapy, and cognitive exercises, the programs celebrate each resident’s unique interests, build on their strengths, and address their specific needs.



Create & Compose:

Art and music programs improve cognitive function and reduce stress for those with memory-related conditions. Residents can enjoy painting, playing music, and other creative outlets to relax and find comfort.



Legacy Kit:

Families work together to create a collection of photos, mementos, and meaningful objects that celebrate a resident’s life. These items spark storytelling, preserve memories, and connect generations.



Travel Times:

Helps residents with dementia stay engaged by either virtually or physically visiting beloved or new places.



Creature Comforts:

Gentle animals, like dogs and birds, are brought into the community to lower stress and boost happiness. Animal interactions promote relaxation and support emotional well-being.



VITA!:

This program incorporates mental stimulation and physical activity into daily routines, thereby enhancing structure and comfort. Residents benefit from improved focus, a sense of calm, and self-care.

Tailored Dining Experience

At Barathaven Memory Care, every chef-prepared meal is thoughtfully designed with wellness, nutrition, and variety in mind. Our menus showcase locally sourced, seasonal ingredients, offering a diverse range of options to suit every taste and dietary preference. With flexible anytime dining, residents can enjoy meals on their own schedule.

Our signature Valeo™ Bites—a tapas-style cuisine—promotes independence and well-being by empowering residents to feed themselves while fostering meaningful connections with team members and fellow residents.

Amenities and Services

Residents in our memory care community enjoy private living spaces and inviting communal areas, including spacious lounges, event rooms, and secure outdoor spaces designed for relaxation and connection. Key amenities include:



Housekeeping & Maintenance:

Clean, stress-free living spaces with chores handled for residents.



24/7 Compassionate Care:

Highly-trained team members provide personalized support around the clock.



Tranquil Outdoor Areas

Safe, peaceful spaces for walks, visits, or quiet relaxation.



Coordinated Transportation:

Convenient rides for appointments, errands, and outings.



Medication & Healthcare Management:

Organized medication schedules and healthcare coordination for peace of mind.

The Montessori Method

The Montessori Method inspires our dedicated team to support residents with dementia by encouraging independence and meaningful engagement. We create a structured yet flexible setting with sensory-rich programs, hands-on tasks, and familiar routines tailored to individual strengths. Our goal is to enhance dignity, cognitive function, and a sense of purpose.

Guided by Legacy, Grounded in Trust

We offer a lifestyle rooted in trust, compassion, and a legacy of excellence. Supported by award-winning services and highly skilled caregivers, we provide families with the peace of mind that comes from knowing that their loved ones are not only receiving exceptional care but are also thriving. Through our specialized programs and opportunities to build meaningful connections with others, residents enjoy a fulfilling and engaging life.

Move Forward with Confidence!

Facing dementia with someone you love is undoubtedly challenging, but it also provides opportunities to create meaningful moments and secure the best possible care. By following the steps outlined in this guide, you can confidently plan for your family member's well-being and future. Remember, you are not alone in this.

If you're considering specialized care, discover how our memory care programs offer award-winning, person-centered support you can trust. Our approach is designed to enhance your family member's lifestyle while giving you peace of mind. [Contact us today](#) to learn how we can help make this transition smooth and supportive for your entire family.

