# Health Professional Quick Reference Guide - Improving the Care for People with Dementia

## What is Dementia?

Symptoms include:
- Memory loss
- Difficulty thinking, understanding and concentrating
- Impairment of perception
- Changed behaviours such as agitation and depression
- Communication difficulties affecting reading, writing and speech
- Reduced ability to perform activities of daily living.

## Early Diagnosis

- Early diagnosis allows the ability to plan ahead and seek appropriate care.
- Encourage the person to talk to their doctor if they are concerned about memory or thinking or changed behaviours.

## Assessment of Dementia

Encourage the person to visit a doctor to arrange a variety of tests to make the diagnosis of dementia, which may include:
- Cognitive Assessment
- CT or MRI (Neuroimaging of brain)
- Blood tests
- Review of other health conditions.

## Living with Dementia

There are legal considerations to consider such as:
- Advanced Care Directive
- Enduring Power of Attorney
Encourage the person to access information about local services to support them to remain in their preferred place and to be active and independent as long possible.

Health care services should be trained in dementia care and treat people with dignity and have respect for the persons individuality, cultural background and preferences.

Carers need support too, encourage them to access information about carer support groups and respite services.

## Treatments

There are many different treatments for dementia:
- Healthy life style including:
- Good nutrition
- Regular exercise
- Maintaining independence
- Maintaining social engagement and connection
- Massage and Relaxation.
- Medications to manage cognitive decline symptoms and changed behaviours.

## Want More Information?

**Read Guidelines**

**Discuss with Clinician**

**Alzheimer’s Australia**
1800 100 500
www.fightdementia.org.au

**My Aged Care**
www.myagedcare.gov.au