



The memory handbook

A practical guide to living with memory problems

For more information
alzheimers.org.uk
0300 222 1122





About this handbook

The memory handbook is for people with mild memory problems. It contains information about memory problems and practical strategies on how to live well with them. Many of the ideas are suggestions from people who have problems with their memory. Others come from family carers or are based on research.

Memory loss can be difficult to cope with and frustrating. However, there are ways of managing the problems you're facing. This handbook should give you some ideas to use or adapt. People have their own ways of helping their memory. What works for one person does not always work for another. Use the suggestions in this booklet to find what works for you. You may want to discuss some of the suggestions with friends and family.

If you have memory loss, you might also be having problems with things like organising, thinking clearly, concentrating, language or seeing things properly. Your symptoms may have resulted in a recent diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or dementia. You may not have a diagnosis at all, but might still be looking for ways to deal with memory problems.

If you would like to talk to someone, see your GP or contact Alzheimer's Society. For information, advice and support, you can call the **National Dementia Helpline** on **0300 222 1122** or get in touch with a local Alzheimer's Society service. Find your local service at alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaconnect

You will also find lots of information about dementia on the Society's website at alzheimers.org.uk



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1

Understanding your memory

This section looks at the different types of memory, how we use our senses and how memory works.

Types of memory

Memory is a very complex thing. There are several different types. You use these different types of memory when you do different things. It can help to know a little about them.

1

Working memory

You use this to store information for short periods. For example, working memory is needed to remember the numbers when you do a sum in your head.

If you have problems with your working memory you may take longer to figure something out. For example, you might need more time handling coins at the supermarket till.

Episodic memory

This is needed to recall past events – recent or distant. You use episodic memory when you remember personal experiences, such as what you had for lunch or when you attended a family gathering. These memories often include recalling emotions or feelings.

If you are struggling to recall recent memories such as where you parked the car you may have a problem with your episodic memory.

Semantic memory

You use this to remember the meanings of words or remember facts. You also use it to remember familiar faces or objects.

If you have a problem with your semantic memory you may have difficulty finding the right words when you are talking to someone.



Prospective memory

You use this to remember about an appointment, date or event that is due to happen in the future.

If you have a problem with your prospective memory you may forget to do something at a particular time. Or you may forget that you had planned something, such as visiting a friend.

1

Procedural memory

This involves activities that you learn and can then do automatically without having to think. You use procedural memory to complete a sequence of actions in a particular order – such as tying shoelaces or swimming. You rely on it when you adopt new habits. This might include learning to use new memory aids – see page 19.

Using your senses

Your memory takes in information provided by your senses. Our five senses are:



Sight



Smell



Taste



Touch



Hearing



For advice and support call the National Dementia Helpline on 0300 222 1122

You can recall information stored in your memory with or without the help of prompts from your senses. A prompt can often help.

1

Prompts



A photograph of someone can prompt the memory of a forgotten name (**sight**).



A particular perfume can prompt the memory of someone special to you (**smell**).



The taste of a dish can prompt the memory of when you first ate it (**taste**).



The feeling of sand under your toes may evoke memories of a childhood holiday (**touch**).



A piece of music may bring back memories of when you first met your partner (**hearing**).

‘Try to live one day at a time and not worry what tomorrow will bring.’

Person with mild cognitive impairment (MCI)



The process of remembering

When you 'record' a memory, and then bring it back, your mind goes through this process:

Receiving

You get a piece of information that is received through your five senses.

Encoding

Your brain converts this information into a form that can be stored. It is held first in your short-term memory.

Storing

You transfer some of the information from short-term memory into the storage of long-term memory. This can take many months and can be helped by repeating it over and over again in your mind (known as 'rehearsal').

Retrieving

You recall the information stored in your long-term memory.

Memory problems can be caused by something going wrong at any of these stages. The way information is stored and retrieved can be very specific to the individual. It often depends on how important the information is to you.

It can be difficult tackling memory problems, but it's important to try, as there are many ways to help your memory. Most people already use specific techniques to help them remember things.







2

Coping with memory problems

This section helps you to understand your difficulties with memory and looks at how you might feel about them. It also has suggestions for how to live well with memory problems.

Types of memory problems

Memory problems vary from person to person. What you consider to be a problem depends partly on what you need or expect to be able to do.

2

Some very common memory problems include:

- forgetting people's names
- struggling to remember day-to-day events or experiences
- misplacing items (such as keys or glasses) around the house
- getting lost in a familiar place or on a familiar journey
- finding it hard to start or follow conversations
- forgetting appointments or important dates (such as birthdays)
- struggling with the steps in a recipe.

Memory problems and your feelings

Everyone reacts differently to memory problems. It's normal to get frustrated or worried, or lose self-confidence.

You may find the following tips helpful.

- Talk to others, such as friends, family or other people experiencing memory problems. They might suggest helpful ways of thinking, and you may be able to find solutions together.
- Do the things that you're comfortable with.



- Focus on memory problems that are having a real impact on your life and that happen more often, such as often misplacing items like a mobile phone.
- Try to focus on the things you can remember and can do. You may well have a good memory of events from many years ago. There will still be many things you are able to do that you learned in the past.

2

Living with memory problems

Many people find the following approaches helpful. It can help to try out different approaches and discover which ones work best for you.

Build on the skills you still have. For example, if you've always been an organiser and good at planning, make the most of this when facing new challenges.

A regular routine

Set up a regular daily routine. This will make it easier to remember what will happen over the course of the day. Include time to relax as part of the routine. But keep some variety and stimulation, such as meeting up with a friend or visiting a museum, so you don't get bored.

Talk about your day

If you've been out for the day, talk to your partner, or a friend or family member afterwards about it. This is a good way of remembering and feeling positive about what you've done that day.



2

Plan ahead

Plan ahead to make your daily tasks more manageable. For example, put out the things you'll need for the next day near the front door – but not somewhere you'll trip over them! For example, you could put out a bag, your keys, and your wallet or purse. This will help you to remember these items the next morning.

One thing at a time

Focus on trying to do only one thing at a time. For example, if you're making a cup of tea, don't make a phone call at the same time. For a new task – like some of the memory strategies in section 4 – repeat it and give yourself time to learn it.

Small steps

Break tasks down into smaller steps. Then you can focus on just one step at a time. For example, if you're wet-shaving or washing your hair, set out the things you need in order then put each one aside once you've used it. Ask for help from others if you think you need it.

One place for everything

Try to keep important things such as your keys, glasses and wallet in the same place. This could be a large bowl somewhere obvious and visible (for example, by the telephone, next to the fridge or on the coffee table). Then you can always find them easily.

Knowing where things are

Try to keep the layout of your home familiar so that you know where things are. Consider labelling drawers and cupboards with words or pictures of what's inside them. Remove any clutter or unnecessary items.



Distractions

If your environment is noisy or very busy, you will find it harder to remember things or concentrate. Your memory works much better with no distractions. Try to make your environment quiet and remove any unnecessary distractions.

Timing

Try to do the most challenging things early in the day, when you have most energy and can concentrate best. Avoid them if you feel tired, anxious or unwell. Take your time.

Support

Talk to friends and family about how you feel and how you can work together. They can support you to try out new techniques to help with your memory.

Don't be too hard on yourself if you find something more difficult than you used to. You could take some time out and come back to it again later or think about different ways to manage the task.



Your next steps



If you have a diagnosis of dementia, find out more, including information about what treatments are available. Speak to your GP or see booklet 872, **The dementia guide**.



Talk to a family member or friend, or a professional such as a counsellor or psychotherapist, about how you're feeling.



For advice and support call the National Dementia Helpline on **0300 222 1122**



A wooden wall with a sign that reads "You Have EVERYTHING you need". The sign is white with black text. The word "EVERYTHING" is in a larger, bold font. The background of the page is a photograph of a wooden wall with a sign that reads "You Have EVERYTHING you need".

3

Memory aids and tools

This section suggests aids that might help with different types of memory problems.

Daily living aids featured in this section are available from the Alzheimer's Society online shop. Visit alheimers.org.uk/shop

Aids to help with memory problems

3

People with memory problems have suggested some of the following aids to help remember things. You might think of them as different tools for tackling different problems. You may have already used some of them.

Look for aids that fit with the skills you have. For example, if you have never used a mobile phone with a calendar, you may find it difficult to start using one now. Easy-to-use mobile phones – which can only be used for calls and nothing else – are available.

An occupational therapist (see page 55) can offer practical advice. For more expensive items, you might be able to 'try before you buy' – perhaps from a local disabilities living centre or independent living centre. Contact your local authority for details of your nearest centre, or see the Disabled Living Foundation in 'Other useful organisations'. Whatever aids you use, people around you can support you to use them.



Traditional memory aids

Calendar or diary

Put a calendar, wallchart or noticeboard in a place where you will see it frequently – on the fridge or by the telephone, for example. You could use a whiteboard to note activities or tasks for the day and wipe them off as you do them.

A notebook or large ‘week to view’ diary can be helpful. You can write down things you want to remember, such as lists of things you need to do, or have done. Keep it somewhere easy to see, such as by the telephone or on a cupboard in the kitchen.

Get into a routine of checking a diary, calendar, noticeboard or whiteboard – perhaps when you wake up in the morning, every mealtime, or every time you make a drink.

Cross the day’s date off your calendar before you go to bed, so that you are certain about the date when you get up the next day.

Keep a journal

Write a few sentences or stick photos in a daily journal. You can look back in it to remind you what you have done or how you felt. A journal may also give you something to show others or to talk about. You could collect tokens or mementos of things you’ve done to add to the journal as reminders.

For example, you could keep a receipt from a meal out, train tickets or a programme from a show.

3

3



Newspapers

Consider buying a newspaper each morning, or getting one delivered. That way you will always know what the day and date are. Tidy up and recycle old newspapers.

Calendar clock

You could use an automatic calendar clock. As well as showing the time, it will remind you of the date and day of the week.

Shopping list

Take a list when you go shopping. Cross things off as you put them into your basket. At home, keep a list of items that have run out so you can easily add them to your shopping list.

If you find it difficult to write, you could keep part of the packaging of items you've run out of. Or you could use a voice recorder or Dictaphone, to help remind you what you need to buy.

Contact numbers

Keep a list of important contact numbers by the phone – for example, the doctor, the police, utility companies, family members or your neighbours. See page 31 for a list of suggested contacts.

Leave your list by the phone or store the contacts in your mobile phone so that you have easy access to any professionals you might need to get in touch with.

You could consider buying a phone that allows you to pre-programme your most commonly used numbers into it. Then you would only need to press one number, or a button with a photo on it, to call someone. (This is sometimes known as 'speed dial').



Other memory aids

Sticky notes

You can use sticky notes anywhere in your home to remind you to do a one-off task.

For example, you could:

- stick one on the freezer to remind you to take something out to defrost
- stick one on your bookshelf to remind you when you have to return a library book.

3

Once you have completed the task, it's important to throw the sticky note away. This way you won't accidentally remind yourself to do something you've already done. It also helps you to keep things tidy.

Permanent reminders

You can make more permanent signs, for example a laminated A4 sheet, to remind you of things you need to do regularly.

For example, you could:

- stick a sign to the inside of the front door to remind you to take your keys, purse, wallet or a shopping list with you
- have a sign by the sink reminding you to wash your hands before cooking
- keep a sign near the bin reminding you what day to leave this out for collection.



Medication reminder box

This is a box with different compartments for each day and times of the day. It is sometimes called a dosette box. The compartments have spaces for a number of different tablets. With a quick look, you can see whether you have taken your tablets for that day. Some models can be set to remind you when to take your pills, with an alarm, vibration or flashing light.

Your pharmacist can help you get a medication reminder box and put your tablets in the right compartments for you.

Colour codes

Try coding or labelling your keys so that each one is a different colour – you can buy coloured rubber key caps or rings for this. For example, your front door key could be red and your garage door could be green. If you live in a flat, the key to your building could be blue.

Electronic devices

There are a range of electronic devices that can be used to help with memory problems. Some of these are also known as ‘assistive technology’. Many people find that electronic devices can help with daily tasks and support them to remain independent.

Some devices will be easy to use, while others may take longer to get used to. You may need the support of friends, family or professionals to help you choose one and get the most out of it. There are benefits to using electronic devices once you’re comfortable with them.

3

Alarm clock

Use an alarm clock, a watch with an alarm, or a kitchen timer to remind you when you need to leave the house for an appointment, or when you have to check something cooking in the oven.

Write down why you have set the alarm, so you know why it is going off. Try to keep this reminder in a place that you're likely to notice, such as a whiteboard, calendar or diary.

3

Mobile phone

There are different ways to use a mobile phone to help you:

- The display screen of most modern mobile phones shows you what day and date it is. You can also use the calendar function on your mobile phone to remind you of the day and date.
- You can programme reminders into most mobile phones. This means an alarm goes off at a certain time with a message reminding you about something you need to do. This could be a one-off event like meeting a friend for lunch, or something recurring like your favourite TV programme. (Some TVs or service providers, such as Freeview or Sky, also have reminder features so you can set a reminder to watch or record a programme).
- When you have booked a doctor's or dentist's appointment, for example, they may be able to send a text reminder to your mobile phone. Ask the receptionist about this when you book.



- Many mobile phones have a built-in voice recorder. Use this (or a portable recording device such as a Dictaphone) to record information that you need to remember. You could play it back later, or transfer reminders to a written calendar at the same time each day.
- Many mobile phones have cameras. You could take a quick picture of something to remind you instead of having to write anything down.

Computer or tablet device

If you have a tablet device (such as an iPad) you can use functions such as reminders, notes or the calendar to help you.

Most email accounts have calendar and 'to do' list features that you can check when you use your computer.

You might need to put a sticky note or label on your computer to remind you to turn it on and check your daily list.

3

'The best advice is treat each day as it dawns. Don't try and second guess how you think you will be, just be the best you can be on that day!'

Person with dementia



For advice and support call the National Dementia Helpline on **0300 222 1122**

Apps

If you have a smartphone or tablet device there are a range of applications (known as ‘apps’) that you might find useful.

These include:

- calendars
- reminders
- maps
- apps for life story work (a personal record of experiences, people and places in your life)
- apps for relaxation exercises and mindfulness – a technique that can help people manage their mental health or simply gain more enjoyment from life.

You can download apps from the internet (via a ‘store’ such as the App Store or Google Play) and use them for specific tasks. For example, you could use a medication reminder app to prompt you to take your pills, and which medicine to take. Some apps will be free, while you will need to pay for others.

There are lots of different apps available and you may want to try different ones to see if they work for you. Some apps have a ‘basic’ free version which you can try before buying the full app.



Prompt and reminder devices

These are devices that detect movement nearby and can be placed near a door. You can set the device to play a voice message as a prompt for your memory when you approach. For example, it could go near your front door, to remind you to lock up when you go out, or to take your keys with you. Or you could have one near the kitchen door to remind you to check you have switched the oven off.

Another kind of reminder device automatically plays a pre-set message at a certain time. For example, if you go shopping at 9.30am on a Tuesday, you can record a message reminding you to take your shopping list and bags with you at this time.

Locator devices

You can use these to help you find frequently mislaid items such as keys or a wallet. You attach a small electronic tag to the item. If you mislay it, you click a button on the locator device to make the tag beep. You will need to keep the locator device somewhere obvious (see 'One place for everything' on page 16). Your friends and family may also find these useful.

3



Your next steps



Look into the different kinds of memory aids that are available and see if any might work for you.



Talk to friends and family about which aids you might use. Plan together how you're going to use the aid and ask for their help.



For advice and support call the National Dementia Helpline on 0300 222 1122



A list of useful contacts

Make a list of contacts and keep it near your phone, so that you have easy access to any professionals you might need to get in touch with. Your list could include, for example:

- doctor/GP surgery
- community/district nurse
- memory service or community mental health team
- social services
- care agency
- chemist/pharmacy
- dentist
- optician
- occupational therapist
- dementia adviser or dementia support worker
- others (including important personal contacts).

3



4

Memory strategies

There are many different strategies you could try to help you cope with memory problems. Some of these strategies involve picturing things in your mind and some use words and rhymes.

People remember things in different ways. This means some strategies will work better for some people. Try them out and see which ones work best for you. This may also change over time.

4

A problem-solving approach

When applying strategies for remembering things, you might find it helpful to follow these steps:

1

Identify the problem

Example: 'I sometimes forget people's names.'

2

Decide how much it matters to you

Example: It happens a lot. It can be embarrassing. (It may be that some things matter a great deal, like forgetting a close friend's name. But will it really matter much if you forget the name of a celebrity who you're unlikely to meet?)

3

Think about how you might help yourself

Example: 'I could carry a small photo album with people's names next to their photos or save them as contacts with photos in my mobile phone. Or I could tell people I'm a bit forgetful, ask for their name, and then repeat it in conversation.' (Other examples are given on the following pages.)

4

Practise your strategies and see what works for you

Example: Rehearse your strategies with a close friend or partner. They can support you to learn. You will then feel more confident when you go out.



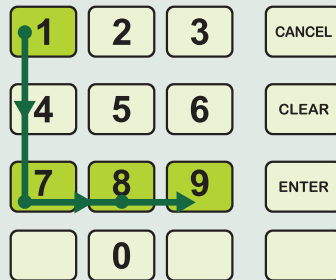
Using mental pictures

Learning new things

Some people can picture things and places in their mind to learn and remember:

- facts
- how to do something new
- how to do routine actions.

For example: How can you remember a PIN so that you can get money from a cash machine? Imagine the numbers making a letter or shape on the number pad:
1789



4

Remembering someone's name

You could try making a picture in your mind from something in the person's name. For example:

- for Natasha **Singh**, you could imagine a girl **singing**
- for Neil Holly, you could imagine a man **kneeling** down and waving a piece of **holly**.

You can have a lot of fun with these kinds of reminders. The more funny or unusual they are, the more likely you are to remember them.



For advice and support call the National Dementia Helpline on 0300 222 1122

You could link the person's most prominent feature with your mental picture of them. Glasses, long curly hair, or something they often wear (such as a particular hat or jumper) could be good things to focus on.

You could also try linking the person with other people who have the same name – for example, 'This person has the same name as my favourite film star, Charlie.'



For help with remembering names and other details of health professionals who visit you, you could use Alzheimer's Society publication 923, My visitor book.

4



Helpful tips:

- When picturing images in your mind, try to be in the place where you are most likely to have to remember it.
- Practise using the image. It will help you learn and remember it.
- Describe or draw your images in a notebook. This will help you to remember them and you will have something to refer to if you forget some of them.
- Tell someone else the strategies you're using. If you can't remember which technique this is or how to use it, they can prompt you.



Jogging your memory

Try the following suggestions to jog your memory in different situations:

Situation	Strategy for jogging your memory
<p>Losing something at home.</p>	<p>Try picturing yourself when you used it last and visualise where you put it down.</p>
<p>Going into a room and being unable to remember why you went there.</p>	<p>Try to picture where you were when you decided to go to the room. Re-tracing your footsteps mentally (or physically) can help you to recover your train of thought.</p>
<p>Preparing food and being unable to remember the ingredients you need for a particular dish.</p>	<p>Try picturing yourself cooking it and using all the ingredients that you need. Going through the alphabet can help you remember names of different ingredients.</p>



Using words and rhymes

Words and rhymes can also help you to remember people's names.

Try thinking of words that start with the same letter as the person's name:

Pleasant Peter
Funny Fiona
Pretty Penny
Smiley Sunita

You could also think of words that rhyme with the person's name:

Tall Paul
Merry Terry
Jolly Molly
Carer Sarah

4

Some people make up their own rhymes, songs or sayings to help them remember facts and numbers. Here are some techniques people told us they use:

- Betty found it difficult to remember the registration number of her car, which was Y288 FHT.

She made up this humorous sentence:

Why (have I got) **288** Fat **H**airy **T**oes?





8								
5	2							
	6	7	9	2				
		1	4	6	3			
		2						
						7	9	
					6			
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8								
		1	6					
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		9	7	4	6			
		5		1	9	3		
		3					4	2

SUDOKU

EASY

PIZZE'S

You might be able to think of a word where the initials stand for a set of actions you have to remember.

- When Jean arrived home, she had to open the front door, switch off the alarm and then press a ‘zapper’ to close the electric garage door. She found it difficult to remember the zapper, so the garage door was often left open.

Jean hung a **DAZ** washing powder packet by her front door to remind her of the procedure.

D
Door

A
Alarm

Z
Zapper

4

- Harry always forgot to close the front gate when he got home. He made up the word **GLO** to help him remember:

G
Gate

L
Lock car door

O
Open front door

It can help if you picture yourself carrying out the sequence of actions in your head.

A joke or funny phrase might also help you to remember.
For example:

Jean **DAZZLED** herself every time she zapped the garage door!

Harry felt a **GLO** of pride as he remembered to lock the gate!



Use any reminder that works for you – it doesn't matter how odd it may seem to someone else.



Your next steps



Try some of these approaches for coping with memory loss.



See if other people can help you with some of these strategies.





5

Staying healthy

Looking after your health will help with your memory day-to-day and in the long run.

Problems can seem worse if you are stressed, worried or ill. If you can keep physically, mentally and socially active it will help you maintain memory, skills and self-confidence.

To stay healthy it is important to think about physical health, mental health, and your social life and activities.

Physical health

- Eat regular balanced meals.
- Eat slowly. Allow yourself at least half an hour for each meal.
- Try to drink at least two litres (six to eight medium glasses) of fluid every day.
- Try to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day. A portion is what fits in your cupped hand.
- If you smoke, try to give up, and drink alcohol in moderation (if at all). Your GP surgery will be able to give you support and advice about healthy levels of alcohol and about stopping smoking.
- Try to do some exercise at least five days a week, for 30 minutes or more each time. A brisk walk, swimming, cycling or pushing a lawnmower all count.
- Consider joining a local exercise group or class such as a walking group, tai chi, aerobics or yoga. Visit your library, speak to your GP or local Age UK to see what is available where you live (see 'Other useful organisations').

5



Mental health

Keep your brain active

Keeping your brain active may help you retain memory and skills longer. Could you learn a new hobby? There are lots of ways to exercise your mind, including:

- reading
- keeping a diary
- doing puzzles or quizzes
- playing card games or board games.

Find ways to deal with stress and worry

It's common for people to become worried when their memory lets them down. This makes it even harder to remember a person's name or what you were doing.

The following tips may help you to manage stress or worry:

- Talking about problems can help. Try sharing your problems with someone you trust. They will welcome your trust and you may feel better just for taking some action. Friends or family may suggest solutions you hadn't thought about.

5

'A sense of humour really helps. Laughter really is the best medicine.'

Person with mild cognitive impairment (MCI)



For advice and support call the National Dementia Helpline on **0300 222 1122**

Relax

- It is important to be able to relax. See the suggestions in 'How to relax and reduce stress' below.

How to relax and reduce stress

There are many different exercises and techniques you can practise to help you relax and reduce stress. Here are some of the more popular ones.

You can sometimes combine these. Try some to see what works for you.

- **Diaphragmatic or belly breathing** – where you sit or lie down with one hand on your chest and one on your belly. You breathe in and out smoothly, slowly and deeply. Your belly (rather than your chest) rises and falls as you breathe.
- **Mindful breathing** – where you sit with your eyes closed and just focus on breathing in and out, and how this feels. When your mind wanders, you bring your focus back to your breathing.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation** – where you lie down and then tense, hold and relax different muscle groups in your body, in turn (hands, arms, neck etc).
- **Guided imagery** – where you visualise yourself being somewhere safe and restful, and imagine experiencing all the sights, sounds and smells.



■ **Listening to relaxing music (or sounds such as waves)**

– you can get a relaxation CD from your library, a shop or online. You can also download relaxation music to a mobile phone or tablet (such as an iPad).

You will need instructions to learn most of these exercises. Ask at the doctor's, look online (for example NHS Choices) or visit your local library or bookshop (often in the 'wellbeing' or 'self help' section). You can get specific apps for your mobile phone or tablet device to help with relaxation or try searching for videos online.



For more information on coping with memory loss, see booklet 872, The dementia guide.

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Staying socially active

- Keep seeing friends and family even if memory problems leave you feeling less confident.
- Try to get out and about if you can. Chat to people.
- Find out if there is a local dementia café or memory café you can attend. Ask at your local Alzheimer's Society or visit alzheimers.org.uk/dementiacconnect
- If you go to a place of worship or community group or activity, continue to attend this regularly.
- Consider volunteering. It can help you to stay socially and physically active and it can be good for physical and mental health. Find out more at alzheimers.org.uk/volunteer



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Everyday activities

- Try to manage your time so you can get everything done. It can help to do the most important things first and come back to other things later.
- Give yourself time for hobbies – for example, reading, singing, swimming or meeting friends.
- Try keeping a ‘wish list’ of things that you would like to do, such as a trip to the cinema, theatre, football match or a local place of interest. Try to make sure that you do something from your wish list once a week to help maintain a sense of wellbeing.

5

‘I volunteer at the local Alzheimer’s Society, and hopefully this helps to keep my brain working. Just because we have memory problems doesn’t mean we can’t help other people in some way.’

Person with mild cognitive impairment (MCI)





Sleep and sleep routines

Sleep is essential to good physical and mental health and wellbeing. Sleep also plays an important role in memory and learning. Research suggests that sleep helps you to store new memories in the brain over time. Sleep can also help with ‘cognitive’ processes (for example, thinking and problem-solving).

There are many reasons why you might have trouble getting to sleep or find that your sleep pattern varies. If you have trouble sleeping, the following suggestions may help.

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- Set the alarm for the same time every morning and get up when it goes off. Do this whether or not you feel you have had a good night’s sleep. It will help your body to develop a regular sleep pattern.
- Being more active and going outside during daylight can help. See ‘Exercise regularly’ on page 44 for more information.
- Avoid long daytime naps. If you do need one, keep it to at most 30 minutes and no later in the day than early afternoon.
- Avoid tea, coffee, cola and cocoa from lunchtime onwards. These are stimulants and can keep you awake. Try caffeine-free varieties.
- Avoid eating a heavy meal or drinking too much fluid in the evening. Digesting a meal can keep you awake, or you might wake up to go to the toilet.
- Don’t drink alcohol before going to bed.



- Try not to do anything that needs a lot of physical or mental energy – such as going for a run or Sudoku – during the hour before you go to bed. Your body and mind will still be awake when you go to bed.
- Wait until you are sleepy before you lie down to go to sleep. Make sure the room is at a comfortable temperature and not too bright.
- Keep your bedroom just for sleeping or sex. Don't use electronic devices, such as the television, radio, phone or tablet device, in the bedroom. Try not to eat or read in bed.
- When you go to bed, turn the light off.
- If you don't fall asleep within about 10 minutes, get up and go to another room if it's safe to do this. You may wish to use a night-light. Do something relaxing in the other room and only go back to bed when you feel sleepy. You may find that you have to do this more than once a night.

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Your next steps



Find ways to be physically, mentally and socially active, and keep an eye on your diet and alcohol intake.



Try to get enough sleep and if you are having problems, talk to your GP.



For advice and support call the National Dementia Helpline on 0300 222 1122



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Service and support from others

You do not have to face memory difficulties on your own. There are lots of people who can support you and help you to stay active and independent. They might be friends, family or professionals. Help is available and it's OK to ask for it.

Family and friends

Remember that the memory loss is not your fault. Work with those around you to solve problems and cope better with memory problems. Ask them to read through this handbook with you.

Family and friends can support you by:

- talking about how you are feeling
- helping you identify and achieve the things that are important to you
- reinforcing approaches and strategies you are trying
- supporting you to do things, not doing them all for you – for example, reminding you about the calendar clock if you ask ‘What day is it?’, rather than just telling you the day.
- not ‘testing’ you – for example, by asking you, ‘Do you remember who this is?’
- being sensitive and supportive if they need to repeat any information they have already told you.



Professionals

Many professionals can help you live well with memory difficulties. If you have a diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment or dementia, you may already be familiar with some of these. Ask your GP if you think you need to see one of them, especially if memory problems are affecting your daily life.

Occupational therapists can work with you to help you with daily life and personal care. They can support you to continue to carry out daily activities that are important to you. An occupational therapist can give advice on memory aids and coping strategies.

Psychologists can help you with depression or anxiety and adjusting to loss or life-changing events. This can include helping you come to terms with memory loss or a diagnosis of dementia. Talking to a trained professional may help you feel less stressed or unhappy. Psychologists can also help you to develop coping strategies for memory problems.

Speech and language therapists can help you and your relatives communicate better if you are having difficulty using or understanding words. They can also help you with memory aids and strategies that use language.

Your local Alzheimer's Society can help put you in touch with dementia advisers, dementia support workers, dementia cafés and support groups. They will all give helpful practical advice.

Find out more at [alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaconnect](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaconnect) or by calling the **National Dementia Helpline** on **0300 222 1122**.



Speak to your local pharmacist if you need help to remember to take your drugs. If you have a local disability living centre (or similar) ask them for advice. They may have equipment to help you remember to take your drugs. You should be able to try things out and maybe even borrow some items for a while.

Structured approaches

There are some structured approaches to help with memory loss and dementia. Ask professionals whether these are available in your area. Your GP, local Alzheimer's Society staff, memory service or community mental health team can help.

Cognitive rehabilitation

In cognitive rehabilitation, a professional such as a psychologist, occupational therapist or speech and language therapist will work with you and someone close to you to help you achieve an agreed goal. It works by getting you to use the parts of your brain that are working to help the parts that are not.

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Memory difficulties can impact on daily life in various ways and there are different things that you may want to change to make your life more enjoyable. This could be learning to use a mobile phone or re-learning a life skill such as cooking. You could change or adapt your environment to make coping with memory loss easier. Cognitive rehabilitation can help you to meet your goals and cope better with memory problems. It can also help you to think about the skills, abilities and knowledge you still have.



Cognitive stimulation therapy

Cognitive stimulation therapy (CST) aims to improve your mental abilities by keeping your brain active. This is done through a series of themed activity sessions carried out over several weeks. One session, for example, might involve doing word puzzles or talking about current affairs. Then in another session you could be playing an instrument along to music. CST also includes elements of reminiscence (see below).

After the first set of sessions, you may be offered maintenance CST (less frequent 'top-up' sessions) to keep the benefits going. There is evidence that approaches such as CST improve mental abilities and quality of life for people with dementia.

Life story work and reminiscence

Life story work is where you use a scrapbook, photo album or app on your mobile phone or tablet to remember and record details of your life. This could be your experiences, values or beliefs. Life story work is usually a joint activity for you and a family member, friend or support worker.

Reminiscence involves talking about things from your past, using prompts such as photos, familiar objects or music. It can help you see your life as a whole and recognise your experiences and achievements.



Sometimes these approaches are combined using a memory box of favourite possessions or memorabilia. Many people find techniques like this helpful because they draw on your earlier memories, which you tend to retain for longer.

By talking about who you are, it can help you and others to focus on yourself as someone with an interesting and varied life who still has skills and interests, rather than on your memory problems.

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Your next steps



Consider creating a record of the important things in your life. You can record memories of experiences, people and places in a book, photo album, or app.



Talk to family and friends about strategies you can use to help with your memory problems.



Speak to a professional about strategies and techniques that may help you.



Alzheimer's Society services

National information and support services

These are available wherever you live in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

National Dementia Helpline – 0300 222 1122

The Helpline is for anyone who is affected by dementia or worried about their memory. Trained advisers provide information, support, guidance and signposting to other appropriate organisations. The Helpline is open 9am–8pm Monday–Wednesday, 9am–5pm Thursday and Friday, and 10am–4pm Saturday and Sunday. You can also contact the Helpline by email at helpline@alzheimers.org.uk

Talking Point online discussion forum

Talking Point is an online support and discussion forum for anyone affected by dementia. It's a place to ask for advice, share information, join in discussions and feel supported. Talking Point is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Visit alzheimers.org.uk/talkingpoint

Dementia Connect

Dementia Connect is our online dementia services directory for anyone affected by dementia in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It has over 4,000 listings of local information, support and services. You can enter your postcode or place name to find services nearest and most relevant to you. It includes services run by voluntary or charity organisations (such as Alzheimer's Society or Age UK), your local authority and private service providers. Each listing includes a map and clear, essential information about that service. Visit alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaconnect



Information

Alzheimer's Society produces a wide range of information for people with dementia, carers, family and friends.

This includes the publications listed in this handbook. You can read this information at alzheimers.org.uk/publications

To request printed copies, go to the order form on our website or phone **0300 303 5933**.

LPA digital assistance service

Alzheimer's Society offers a Lasting power of attorney digital assistance service to help people with dementia create and register LPAs online. If you don't have access to the internet, or are not confident using a computer and have no one who can help, we will complete the forms on your behalf. Call the **Alzheimer's Society National Dementia Helpline** on **0300 222 1122**.

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Local services

Alzheimer's Society provides a range of local services in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. These include dementia advisers and dementia support workers, Singing for the Brain® groups, dementia cafés, befriending services (such as Side by Side) and support for carers.

The services that are available can vary from place to place. Contact your local Alzheimer's Society office or the National Dementia Helpline for more information about Society services in your area or visit alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaconnect



Other useful organisations

There are lots of other organisations that can offer help and support with the issues covered in this guide. Some of these are listed below.

AcTo Dementia

www.actodementia.com

Provides recommendations and guidance on accessible touchscreen apps for people living with dementia.

Age UK

0800 169 6565 (advice line, 8am–7pm every day)

www.ageuk.org.uk

Age Cymru

08000 223 444 (helpline, 9am–5pm weekdays)

www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru

Age NI

0808 808 7575 (advice line, 9am–5pm weekdays)

www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland

Charity offering companionship, advice and support for older people.



AT Dementia

Trent Dementia Services Development Centre
Institute of Mental Health
University of Nottingham Innovation Park
Jubilee Campus, Triumph Road
Nottingham NG7 2TU
0115 748 4220
www.atdementia.org.uk

A charity that works to promote high-quality care and services for people with dementia through consultancy, project work, education and information and advice on assistive technologies.

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

15 St John's Business Park
Lutterworth
Leicestershire LE17 4HB
01455 883300
bacp@bacp.co.uk
www.bacp.co.uk

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National body representing counsellors and psychotherapists.
Can provide a list of counsellors and psychotherapists in your area.

British Psychological Society

St Andrews House
48 Princess Road East
Leicester LE1 7DR
0116 254 9568
enquiries@bps.org.uk
www.bps.org.uk

Provides access to a list of clinical and counselling psychologists who offer private therapy services.



Royal College of Occupational Therapists

106–114 Borough High Street
Southwark
London SE1 1LB
020 7357 6480
www.rcot.co.uk

Provides details of independent occupational therapists in your local area.

Disabled Living Foundation

Unit 1, 34 Chatfield Road
London SW11 3SE
0300 999 0004 (helpline, 10am–4pm Tuesday–Thursday)
helpline@dlf.org.uk
www.dlf.org.uk

A national charity that provides impartial advice, information and training on independent living. Has a library of simple electronic aids which people in England can borrow for two weeks to try out.

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

2 White Hart Yard
London SE1 1NX
020 7378 1200
info@rcslt.org
www.rcslt.org

The professional body for speech and language therapists in the UK. It provides information about speech and language therapy.

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For advice and support call the National Dementia Helpline on **0300 222 1122**

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British Psychological Society: A learned society and the representative body for psychology and psychologists in the UK. The Society and its members develop, promote and apply psychology for the public good. BPS enhances the efficiency and usefulness of psychologists by setting high standards of professional education and knowledge.

Royal College of Occupational Therapists: The professional body for occupational therapists in the UK, representing members in local, national and international arenas, and supporting professional development in research and practice.

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Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists:

The professional body for speech and language therapists in the UK, providing leadership and setting professional standards. It facilitates research, promotes better education and training of speech and language therapists, and provides information for our members and the public.



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- The 3 Es (Worcester)
- The 3 Ts (Portsmouth)
- Thinking Allowed (Bristol)

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This handbook has been reviewed by people affected by memory problems. We would like to thank them for their generous and valued contributions.

It can be downloaded from our website at alzheimers.org.uk/memoryhandbook

A list of sources is available on request.

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Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading dementia charity. We provide information and support, improve care, fund research, and create lasting change for people affected by dementia.

If you have any concerns about Alzheimer's disease or any other form of dementia, visit alzheimers.org.uk or call the **Alzheimer's Society National Dementia Helpline** on **0300 222 1122**. (Interpreters are available in any language. Calls may be recorded or monitored for training and evaluation purposes.)



The British
Psychological Society

Royal College of
Occupational
Therapists



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43–44 Crutched Friars
London EC3N 2AE

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Code 1540

