

GUIDE · 6 MIN READ

Early signs of dementia in an elderly parent

If you've found yourself googling this at 11pm, you're already doing the right thing. Here's what doctors look for — and what to do this week.

01. Forgetting recent conversations, not just names

Forgetting a name is normal. Forgetting you had the conversation an hour ago — and asking again as if it's new — is not.

02. Repeating the same question within minutes

Short-term memory loss is one of the earliest and most reliable signs. Different from 'where did I put my keys'.

03. Word-finding pauses

Substituting 'the thing you sit on' for 'chair', or trailing off mid-sentence. Everyone does it occasionally; with dementia it becomes daily.

04. Getting lost on familiar routes

Driving home the long way, missing the turning for the shop, or coming back from the corner shop two hours late.

05. Withdrawing from hobbies and friends

Stopping the bridge club, the church, the weekly call. Often dismissed as 'just slowing down'. It's a red flag.

06. Money confusion

Unopened bills, double-paid bills, falling for scam letters or phone calls. Often the first thing family notice.

07. Mood and personality changes

A gentle person becoming snappy. A confident person becoming anxious. Sudden suspicion of neighbours or family.

08. Trouble with familiar tasks

Struggling to follow a recipe they've cooked for 40 years, or to use the washing machine. The skill is intact; the sequencing isn't.

What to do this week

1. Start writing down examples with dates — three or four is enough to take to the GP.
2. Book a routine GP appointment and ask specifically for a memory assessment.
3. Rule out the reversible causes first: a urinary tract infection, vitamin B12 deficiency, thyroid problems and depression all mimic dementia.
4. If memory issues are confirmed, ask for a referral to the local memory clinic.

Turn 'I think something's wrong' into a clear picture

The Care Companion logs the small changes day by day and prints a one-page summary for the GP. 7-day free trial.

[Start free trial](#)

General guidance for family carers. Not a substitute for medical advice. For urgent concerns, call NHS 111 (UK) or your doctor.

Free guide from The Care Companion — practical tools for families caring for someone with dementia. More guides at thecarecompanion.com/guides