

GUIDE · 8 MIN READ

A dementia diagnosis: what to do in the first 30 days

No one hands you a map. Here is the order things actually need to happen, from families who've been through it.

Week 1 — Breathe, and write nothing down yet

The first week is for grief and processing. Don't rush into paperwork. Tell one or two people you trust. Cancel anything non-essential. Sleep.

Week 2 — Get the medical picture straight

Request a copy of the diagnosis letter. Confirm the type (Alzheimer's, vascular, Lewy body, frontotemporal — they progress differently). Ask the memory clinic which medication, if any, has been started, and what to watch for.

Week 2 — Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA), urgently

An LPA must be signed while the person still has mental capacity. Even early-stage dementia can be a window. Set up both kinds: Property & Financial Affairs, and Health & Welfare. UK families register at gov.uk; US families set up a Durable Power of Attorney and a Healthcare Proxy. This is the single most important task in the first month.

Week 3 — Money, benefits and practical entitlements

Apply for Attendance Allowance (UK, not means-tested) or look at Medicaid waiver programs and VA Aid & Attendance (US). Notify the council/local authority to ask for a Carer's Assessment. Tell the bank — most have a dedicated vulnerable customer team.

Week 3 — Driving and the DVLA / DMV

Diagnosis must be reported. It does not automatically end driving, but it triggers an assessment. Better the family raises it than waits for an incident.

Week 4 — Build the support network

Local Admiral Nurses or Alzheimer's Society (UK), Alzheimer's Association 24/7 helpline 800.272.3900 (US). Tell siblings what you need — they will help if you ask clearly.

Week 4 — Set up one place for all of it

Binders, notebooks, sticky notes and group chats stop working fast. You need one place for medications, appointments, the LPA, observations, and the questions you keep meaning to ask the doctor.

One calm place for the next 30 days

Medications, appointments, the LPA, daily observations, and a one-page summary for every doctor visit. 7-day free trial.

[Start free trial](#)

General guidance, not legal or medical advice. UK guidance references the NHS and gov.uk; US guidance references Medicare, Medicaid and the Alzheimer's Association.

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