



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**  
Social Care **Wales**

# Myths and facts about dementia

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There are some common myths about dementia

## **Myth 1: Dementia is a natural part of ageing**

While age is a significant risk factor in developing a dementia, not all older people will have dementia.

850,000 people are living with a dementia in the UK. Of those, 42,325 are under 65. This is called Young Onset dementia

1 in 6 people over 80 are living with dementia. This means that 5 in 6 people over 80 do NOT have dementia.

The percentages of people affected by dementia decreases with younger age groups:

1 in 14 people over the age of 65

1 in 688 people under the age of 65

(Source: Dementia UK, 2014)

## **Myth 2: Whether you get dementia or not is a lottery**

The causes of dementia are not fully understood, but we are learning that there are things we can do to reduce our risk factors:

- Be physically active
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Be socially active
- Avoid drinking too much alcohol
- Stop smoking
- Commit to review your health

In doing so, we can reduce our risk factors by up to 60 per cent.

## **Myth 3: People with dementia are like babies**

Some people will talk about people with dementia regressing and becoming like babies.

This is simply not true.

People living with dementia will have experienced and achieved many things in life and it's damaging to think about them as childlike.

This incorrect view can affect people's attitudes by treating the person as they would a child and using terms like 'good girl' and 'naughty boy'.

You must challenge this and ensure people living with a dementia are treated with respect and dignity.

## Case study

A case study to help you improve your practice about how there's more to a person than dementia.

[View transcript](#)

### **PETER:**

[00:00:00] I used to work in Barnsley and walk down from where I worked down to the bus station and who'd always be at the bottom of the street? [Pointing at his wife]

[00:00:12] My biggest achievement is becoming a father.

[00:00:19] I'm Peter, I was born in Barnsley, I used to be a potter, I love drawing, painting and drawing.

[00:00:26] I've always enjoyed drawing because I was an architect.

[00:00:33] I designed the building on the sea front at Llandudno. This building was opened officially by Diana and Prince Charles.

[00:00:42] I've designed and built so many buildings, and to be honest I can't remember any of them, that's one of the cruel things of dementia.

[00:00:49] The other day when I was trying to write me own, me own name and all of a sudden I thought "What the hell's that I've written?" And it was gobbledegook.

[00:01:01] Though I now know that I have limitations, I really just carry on with pretty normal life.

[00:01:07] I like to go walking and it keeps me fit.

[00:01:11] It's only up here that it's done the damage, the rest of my life is pretty normal.

**AVRIL:**

[00:01:19] He's kind, he's particularly caring, he will do anything for anybody. He's just a really nice man.

**PETER:**

[00:01:26] When Avril's gone to work or something and next door are out, I usually look how many cars there are and if there's two cars I know there's nobody in, so I can play the piano.

[00:01:40] The best thing since sliced bread, as far as I'm concerned.

[00:01:45] If you meet somebody with dementia, have patience, be kind.

**AVRIL:**

[00:01:52] We're not just talking about people with dementia now, we're talking about people with dementia in the future and it could be anybody.

**PETER:**

[00:02:01] These things, they just happen as quickly as that.

## Research links

Improve your practice by accessing the latest research findings:

[Healthy Lifestyles Reduce the Incidence of Chronic Diseases and Dementia: Evidence from the Caerphilly Cohort Study \(2013\)](#)

[A 2 year multidomain intervention of diet, exercise, cognitive training, and vascular risk monitoring versus control to prevent cognitive decline in at-risk elderly people \(FINGER\): a randomised controlled trial \(2015\)](#)

[Potentially modifiable lifestyle factors, cognitive reserve, and cognitive function in later life: A cross-sectional study \(lifestyle factors to help prevent developing dementia\) 2017](#)

[The Agewell trial: a pilot randomised controlled trial of a behaviour change intervention to promote healthy ageing and reduce risk of dementia in later life \(2015\)](#)

[A 'new life' story or 'delaying the inevitable'? Exploring older people's narratives during exercise uptake \(2016\)](#)

## **We want your feedback**

Help us to improve the Dementia resource for care professionals by telling us what you think about it in our short [four question survey](#).