

# dementia friendly @ work training

## Participant's Guide

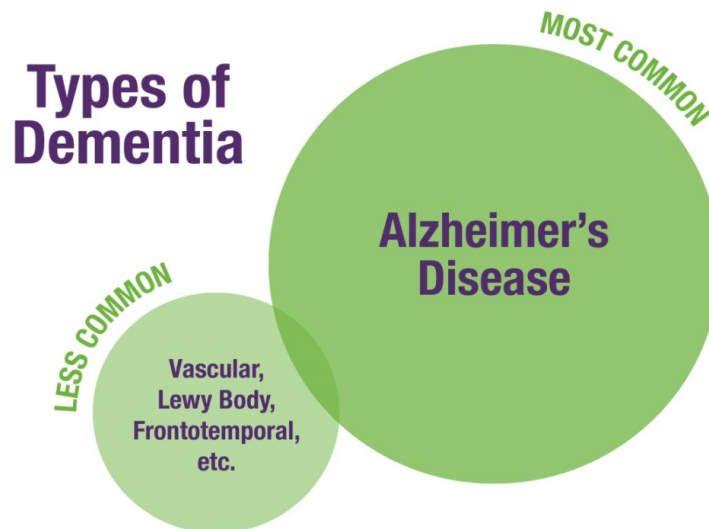


In our communities, nearly 60 percent of people with Alzheimer's disease, a form of dementia, live in their own homes and need support from families and community members. THANK YOU for taking action to learn more about creating dementia-friendly environments for everyone touched by Alzheimer's.

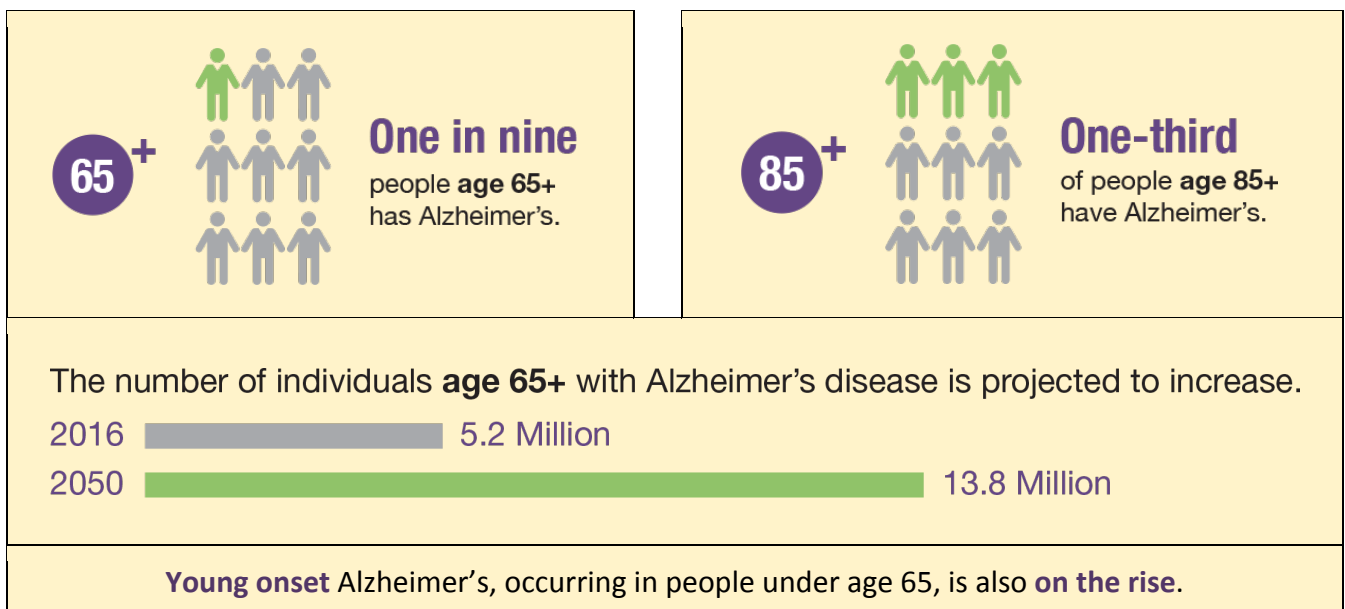
This training will help you understand dementia and the 10 warning signs of Alzheimer's disease. It will give you tips on what's involved in creating an informed, safe, and respectful environment for a person living with dementia so that dementia friendly is "at work" everywhere.

## Know What Dementia Is

Dementia is a general term for a loss of memory and other thinking abilities that is serious enough to interfere with activities of daily life. Dementia has many causes. Alzheimer’s disease, the most common cause of dementia, is a disease of the brain that leads to problems with memory, thinking, and behavior. Alzheimer’s and other dementias are not a normal part of aging.



## Know the Facts about Alzheimer’s



## Know the Signs of Alzheimer’s Disease

It’s important to understand the difference between normal aging and Alzheimer’s disease.

Is it Normal Aging or Alzheimer’s Disease?	
Normal Aging	10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer’s Disease
Sometimes forgetting names or appointments but remembering them later	Memory loss that disrupts daily life
Making occasional errors when balancing a checkbook	Challenges in planning or solving problems
Needing occasional help to use the settings on a microwave or to record a TV show	Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure
Confused about the day of the week but recalling later	Confusion with time or place
Vision changes (such as cataracts)	Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships
Sometimes having trouble finding the right word	New problems with words in speaking or writing
Misplacing things from time to time and retracing steps to find them	Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
Making a bad decision once in a while	Decreased or poor judgment
Sometimes feeling weary of work, family and social obligations	Withdrawal from work or social activities
Becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted	Changes in mood and personality

## Know How to Communicate

Consider these observations and tips when speaking and interacting with someone who has dementia and is on site at your business or organization.

- ✓ **Speak clearly and be patient.** Speak clearly, calmly, and slowly to allow the person time to understand information. Use simple short sentences and avoid direct questions. Keep choices to a minimum and don't raise your voice. When possible, use a quiet, non-distracting space/place to talk.
- ✓ **Listen closely.** Listen carefully to what the person has to say. Give plenty of encouragement as you look for clues about what they may be trying to communicate. The person may seem confused and say something that doesn't make sense to you. If the person finds it difficult to come up with a word, suggest one. But, be careful not to interrupt or finish their sentence. Don't rush. Try to go at their pace and work through the situation as best you can.
- ✓ **Smile warmly and make eye contact.** Someone with dementia may find it difficult to understand what is being said, but may quickly interpret the look on your face, your tone of voice, and your body language. Use a friendly tone and give body cues that respect their personal space.
- ✓ **Respond to a look of distress.** At times, people with dementia may have forgotten where they live. If someone looks lost and distressed, offer to help by asking if their address is on something in their pocket or bag. When necessary, local police can be of help.
- ✓ **Watch for signs of change and offer help accordingly. Every day can be different.** For some people with dementia, each day can bring a change in what they can do. How you help someone may differ each time you interact with them.

## Know How to Communicate: Retail Setting

Consider these responses to common practices of someone with dementia in a retail setting.

- ✓ **Forgetting to pay.** People with dementia may forget to pay for something they have picked up. Approach the person before they leave the store, ask if they are done shopping for the day, and say you would be happy to help them check out. Guide them to the checkout lane. Keep an eye out for the person forgetting to take what they purchased as they leave.
- ✓ **Remembering and finding items.** A person with dementia may have forgotten what they came in to buy. They may have a list, but have problems finding the items. Offer to help with the list. Help choose the typical amount of an item, particularly if they seem to be buying an unusually large amount.
- ✓ **Making choices.** While having choices is good, for someone with dementia, too much choice can be confusing. Ask what the person would like and then describe two or three options. Allow him or her time to think and make a decision.
- ✓ **Handling money.** Counting money, calculating change, recognizing coins and bills, and knowing the value of money can all be difficult for someone with dementia. Offer to help count out the money and be sure to provide a receipt. When appropriate, help someone through the steps of a credit card transaction.



### Practice/Discussion

*Using your case studies, discuss key points on how you and/or your team would handle the situation.*

## Creating a Dementia Friendly Physical Space

Small changes in a physical space can make a big difference in making an environment feel safe to someone with dementia. A welcoming environment (both indoors and outdoors) helps a person with dementia continue to access everyday activities like shopping, banking or participating in their faith community.

Most people working or volunteering in a community setting don't have the authority to alter the physical environment, yet it's important that they identify barriers to all consumers and share their insights with the appropriate decision makers. There are many best practices for improving access for people with dementia. Most are relatively low cost and can benefit everyone, including people with dementia.

- ✓ **Entrances** should be clearly visible and understood as an entrance. Make sure that glass doors are clearly marked.
- ✓ **Signage** for finding your way around should be clear, should use bold type, and should have contrast between the words and the background. Signs should be mounted to the doors or spaces they refer to – not mounted on nearby surfaces. Signs should be at eye level and well-lit. Avoid using highly stylized or abstract images or icons on signage. Think about placing signs at key decision points for someone who is trying to navigate your premises for the first time. Signs for getting to and from public restrooms are particularly important.
- ✓ **Lighting** at entrances should be high powered and include natural light when possible. Avoid pools of bright light and deep shadows as they appear to be “holes” to people with vision issues.
- ✓ **Flooring** should be plain, not shiny, and not slippery. Bold patterns on carpets, curtains or wallpaper can cause perceptual problems; plain walls and flooring are recommended. Keep floor finishes flush rather than stepped; changes to floor surfaces can cause confusion. Pathways should be wide and free of clutter.
- ✓ **A family/unisex restroom or changing facility** will allow someone to be assisted without causing embarrassment to them or another user.
- ✓ **Quiet** areas for someone who may be feeling anxious or confused can help that person recover enough to independently complete what they were doing.
- ✓ **Seating** areas in large spaces, especially areas where people are waiting, can help someone relax.
- ✓ **Layout** of an area should be free of clutter and arranged to make it easy to move around. Passageways should be clear.

**Think about your physical environment. What ideas should your organization consider to make it more dementia friendly?**

## **Help to Become Dementia Friendly @ Work**

Today we covered dementia awareness, communication, and suggestions for creating a dementia friendly physical space.

**What is one idea you learned that you will implement within the next month to be dementia friendly @ work?**

## Resources in Your Community

### **Alzheimer's Association Minnesota North Dakota**

The 24/7 Helpline serves people with memory loss, care partners, health care professionals, the general public, diverse populations, and concerned friends and family. The Helpline offers referrals to local community programs and services, dementia-related education, crisis assistance and emotional support. Call 1-800-272-3900 or visit [www.alz.org/mnnd](http://www.alz.org/mnnd)

### **Senior LinkAge Line®**

This resource provides information, assistance and connections to various services and resources in your community. Call 1-800-333-2433 or visit [www.MinnesotaHelp.info](http://www.MinnesotaHelp.info)®

## References

### **ACT on Alzheimer's Dementia-Friendly Resources**

[www.actonalz.org/community-resources](http://www.actonalz.org/community-resources)

### **Alzheimer's Association**

2016 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures, Alzheimer's & Dementia 2016, Volume 12, Issue 4

[www.alz.org/facts/](http://www.alz.org/facts/)

### **10 Signs of Alzheimer's Disease**

[www.alz.org/alzheimers\\_disease\\_10\\_signs\\_of\\_alzheimers.asp](http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_10_signs_of_alzheimers.asp)