

Communicating With Someone With Dementia

The following suggestions may be helpful in communicating with someone who has dementia.

- **Reduce distractions.**

Turn off the television or radio, or move to a quiet location.

- **Make eye contact.**

This shows who is speaking and allows the person to watch your face for information.

- **Use gentle touch** to get attention.

- **Keep information short** and to the point.

- **Repeat** key information to help maintain focus.

- **Be patient.**

Give the person extra time to respond.

- **Give choices.**

If the person seems to be struggling to answer or come up with ideas, ask questions with choices rather than open-ended questions (e.g., “Would you like a sandwich or soup?” rather than, “What do you want for lunch?”). If the person does not respond, try making a suggestion (e.g., “The soup looks good today. It’s your favourite.”).

- **Avoid too many questions.**

Try making comments instead. For example, while looking at a photo album, avoid asking “Who is that?” or “What’s he doing?”. Instead say, “This is Uncle Fred. He’s riding his tractor.”.

- **Write reminders.**

Written reminders or steps on how to do tasks may also be helpful (e.g., where to keep items, turn off hearing aid every night, etc.).

- **Use calendars and memory books** to aid in remembering.

Additional Resources

For further information visit:

- [Communicating with Seniors With Speech, Language and/or Hearing Difficulties](#) (an ACSLPA Information Sheet)
- [Alzheimer Society Canada](#)
- [American Speech and Hearing Association](#)

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Getting Help

If you suspect a problem, consult a Registered Speech-Language Pathologist (R.SLP). To find a practitioner:

- Contact HEALTH LINK - Health Advice 24/7 at 8-1-1 or visit: www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca
- Enquire at a Public Health Centre
- Find a private practice SLP:
 - Search the Yellow Pages
 - Contact the Alberta Speech-Language Association of Private Practitioners (ASAPP) website at www.asapp.ca.