

ABOUT DEMENTIA

What is dementia? Dementia is a disease that destroys brain cells and brain function. It can affect your memory and the way you think. There are different kinds of dementia and every case is different. Your doctor will help keep track of your symptoms and your needs.

What symptoms does dementia cause? Symptoms of dementia often start off very mild and get worse slowly. Symptoms can include:

- Forgetting all sorts of things
- Confusion
- Trouble with language (for example, not being able to find the right words for things)
- Trouble concentrating and reasoning
- Problems with tasks such as paying bills or balancing a checkbook
- Getting lost in familiar places

As dementia gets worse, it can cause:

- Anger or aggression
- A person to see things that aren't there or believe things that aren't true
- Impair ability to eat, bathe, dress, or do other everyday tasks
- Loss of bladder and bowel control

How is dementia treated? That depends on what your needs are and the type of dementia you have.

- ✓ Medical staff will watch your symptoms and work with you to find solutions to the problems that might come up.
- ✓ You will be taught new skills to help you remember things and organize your day better.
- ✓ If you have Alzheimer's Disease, there are medicines that might help.
- ✓ If you have dementia related to your blood circulation, your doctor will work on keeping your blood pressure and cholesterol as close to normal as possible to reduce further injury to your brain.
- ✓ If you get anxious or depressed your doctor may prescribe medication.

Can dementia be prevented? — There are no proven ways to prevent dementia. But here are some things that seem to help keep the brain healthy:

- Physical activity
- Social interaction
- Keeping the brain busy, for example by reading or doing puzzles

SUMMARY

DECISION SUPPORT

PATIENT EDUCATION/SELF MANAGEMENT

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Patients with dementia often have so much trouble with thinking and memory that they are not able to tell the doctor their wishes for medical treatment. This is especially true when it comes to wishes about end of life treatment including being on machines or having a feeding tube. Writing down your wishes now will help be sure they are followed later.

What is advance care planning?

- Thinking and planning ahead about what kind of medical care you want as you get sicker.
- The kind of medical treatment you want usually depends on what is important to you.
- Talking about your wishes with loved ones and your doctors and nurses and writing them down will help make sure that your wishes are followed.

What is an Advance Directive?

- Advance Directives are papers used to write down your wishes for end of life care.
- They allow you to say what you want so that family, friends, doctors, and nurses will know for sure what you want if you can no longer speak for yourself.
- An Advance Directive allows you to choose someone to make medical decisions for you if you can no longer make them.
- In CDCR we use CDCR Form 7421 Advance Directive for Health Care.

Listed below are some of the things to consider regarding your end of life wishes. You may wish to circle the items that are most important to you to discuss with your provider when you complete your Advance Directive.

- Physical comfort
- Relief of pain and distress
- To die naturally
- To live as long as possible no matter what
- To be able to care for my physical needs
- To be able to recognize family & friends
- To be able to make my own decisions
- To receive palliative (comfort) care & hospice
- Would you want to have CPR done?
- Would you want a feeding tube?
- Would you want to be kept alive by machines (ventilator) in the following cases?:
 - If my brain's thinking functions were destroyed?
 - If I were near death with a terminal illness?
- Is there a person you want to help attend to your spiritual needs as death nears?
- Is there someone you wish to have make medical decisions for you (called a health care surrogate or agent) when/if you are no longer able to speak for yourself?
- If you are very sick and near the end of your life is there a family member/friend you would like to called?
- Is there someone different to call after your death?

Q: What if I change my mind?

- You may complete a new Advance Directive (CDCR Form 7421) at any time as your wishes change. You may complete an Advance Directive even when you are young and perfectly healthy.

**TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR OR ANY MEMBER OF YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM
TO COMPLETE OR UPDATE YOUR ADVANCE DIRECTIVE.**