



Health and Healthcare

IDD and Dementia Fact Sheet #1

People living with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are more likely to have certain chronic conditions—like asthma, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and osteoporosis—compared to people without IDD. Also, they may start to develop certain age-related conditions—like arthritis, incontinence, poor eyesight, hearing loss, and dementia—earlier than people without IDD.

Most people living with IDD have about the same risk of developing dementia as people without IDD. But people living with Down syndrome have a much higher risk of developing dementia.

People living with IDD may have problems with forgetting how to do normal things. Forgetfulness can be caused by a lot of things, including delirium, depression, and dementia.

Delirium causes sudden changes in thinking or behavior. Most causes of delirium (like medication side effects, dehydration, infections, blood sugars that are too high or too low, and thyroid and kidney problems) can be treated and get better or go away.

People living with depression lose interest in doing normal activities, have problems concentrating, and show changes in eating and sleeping. People living with IDD are more likely to develop depression than people without IDD.

People with dementia gradually develop problems in learning new things and remembering things that have happened—especially those that have happened recently. People living with IDD and dementia may not be able to learn new skills, but there are things family members can do to help them keep their current skills as long as possible and live a good life with dementia. See the fact sheet on “Failure-Free Activities.”

Let your family member’s healthcare team know if you notice changes in physical health, forgetfulness, behaviors, or abilities. The National Task Group has developed an Early Detection Screening Tool that helps organize this information. You can get a copy of the tool at [Early Detection Tool](#).

You can also take a video of your family member doing usual activities at regular intervals (like twice a year) so that you can show the healthcare team any changes that have taken place.

Make sure your family member gets regular check-ups. At least once each year, your family member should have a:

- Physical exam





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- Skin check
- Routine blood work
- Screening for common mental health problems like depression and anxiety
- Dental exam
- Hearing test
- Vision test

Let your family member know what to expect when seeing a healthcare provider. While at the clinic or office, make sure your family member is involved in treatment decisions. You might need to use visuals or ask the provider to slow down and explain.

Encourage your family member to have a healthy lifestyle, with plenty of good food, activity, rest, time with others, and support.

- A healthy diet follows USDA's MyPlate ([My Plate](#)), with special focus on:
 - Plenty of water. Dehydration can cause problems with constipation and confusion.
 - Fruits and vegetables at every meal
 - Limiting condiments (like mayonnaise and ketchup)
 - Choosing grilled foods over fried foods
 - Controlling portion size
- Staying active helps physical and mental health. Your family member doesn't have to sweat or spend a long time on physical activity to benefit. Even a little bit of activity several times a day helps. The best activities are things your family member enjoys—especially if they involve other people.
- Stick to a regular sleep schedule. If falling asleep or staying asleep is a problem, limit caffeine and consider a sleep study to check for sleep apnea. Also, talk to the doctor about sleep medicines.
- Having regular contact with others—whether it is working a job, being a part of activities, or just being with friends—helps your family member feel needed and supported.
- If your family member is dealing with a major change, talk to him or her about it. Consider ways to reduce stress like doing deep breathing or talking to a counselor.





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These fact sheets were created by Dementia Friendly North Central/East Texas. For more information, go to: [Dementia Friendly](#)

Resources for people with memory loss and their family caregivers are available at: [Resources](#)

Resources include the following fact sheets on IDD and dementia:

1. *Health and Healthcare*
2. *Dementia Risks, Signs, and Symptoms*
3. *Stages of Dementia*
4. *Planning for the Future*
5. *Getting Help*
6. *Making Home Age- and Dementia Friendly*
7. *Failure-Free Activities*
8. *Responding to Behaviors*

You can get resource information mailed to you by calling 682-433-0375.

This fact sheet was prepared by Dementia Friendly North Central/East Texas, which is supported by a financial assistance award from the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in the amount of \$1 million. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

