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Making your place of worship dementia friendly



In South Asian communities there is not one word that can be used to describe dementia. Dementia is a set of symptoms that may include problems remembering, speaking and understanding. It is important to understand that dementia is a medical condition and not a natural part of ageing.

There may be a number of people within your community that are living with or caring for someone living with dementia. It is really important that all members of our communities are able to visit their place of worship and feel they are an equal member of your community. These tips will help you to understand dementia and how you can support people.



Understanding dementia

Visit www.mhcc.nhs.uk/dementia to watch our film and view our leaflet available in alternative languages.

- ➔ dementia is nothing to be ashamed of – talk about the signs and symptoms and living with dementia within your community
- ➔ if you see someone looking confused do not be afraid to provide gentle reassurance. Talk to them to find out how you can help meet their needs
- ➔ if you are concerned about someone's behaviour or memory encourage them to speak to their GP
- ➔ encourage and support people living with dementia to continue to pray at your place of worship. This can include talking slowly. Don't rush them but be patient and understanding.



Signs and symptoms of dementia

There are many different types of dementia. The most common for people from South Asian communities is vascular dementia.

Vascular dementia is caused by reduced blood supply to the brain due to diseased blood vessels.

To be healthy and function properly, brain cells need a constant supply of blood to bring oxygen and nutrients. Blood is delivered to the brain through a network of vessels called the vascular system. If the vascular system within the brain becomes damaged - so that the blood vessels leak or become blocked - then blood cannot reach the brain cells and they will eventually die.

This death of brain cells can cause problems with memory, thinking or reasoning. Together these three elements are known as cognition. When these cognitive problems are bad enough to have a significant impact on daily life, this is known as vascular dementia.

Dementia affects people in different ways but here are some of the common signs and symptoms:

- ➔ problems remembering things or events that have recently happened
- ➔ problems doing everyday tasks
- ➔ difficulty with speech and language
- ➔ appearing confused/disorientated
- ➔ changes in a person's personality and mood.

If you or someone you know is experiencing any of the symptoms described, there could be lots of reasons for this. It is very important that you make an appointment at your GP Practice.

You can help people to reduce the risk of dementia by encouraging them to:

→ have a healthy diet, lifestyle and avoid fatty foods



→ don't smoke



→ keep physically active



→ keep mentally active



→ manage their diabetes



Promote and encourage members of your community to become a dementia friend or a dementia champion. Further information is available by contacting Dementia Friends on 0300 222 5855.

Small changes that make a big difference

It's really important that people living with dementia can continue to use mosques and temples. Here are some tips to help you make your place of worship dementia friendly:

Lighting - improved lighting can help to prevent dark areas and shadows forming on the floor which can be confusing for someone living with dementia.

Flooring – different colours can represent something different for someone living with dementia, e.g. dark carpets or rugs can look like an object that needs to be stepped over, it may look like a hole in the floor. Blue carpets/tiles may look like water and green carpet/tiles may look like grass.

Use different coloured flooring/tiling to the colouring on the walls.

Wall paper/wall coverings – try not to use stripes or strong patterns.

Electrical Appliances – trailing cables or wires can cause confusion and fear for someone living with dementia e.g. these wires can appear like a snake.

Furniture/furnishing – living with dementia can cause confusion particularly when trying to remember where things are kept. Use pictures and labels on cupboards so people can find items easily.

Mirrors – someone living with dementia may find looking in a mirror quite distressing as they may not recognise their own reflection – limit the number of mirrors or where possible remove mirrors.

Toilet facilities – these facilities will need to be very clearly signposted.

- ➔ the toilet seat should be in a different colour to the toilet basin
- ➔ toilet rolls should also be in a different colour to the walls
- ➔ hand rails should be painted a different colour to the walls, this will help them to stand out
- ➔ taps – these will need to be clearly marked ‘hot’ and ‘cold’
- ➔ change toilet door locks so they can be easily opened from the outside in case of an emergency
- ➔ provide sanitary disposal facilities within the male and female toilet facilities to safely dispose of incontinence pads to ensure anyone living with this condition can be comfortable prior to praying.



This leaflet is also available in alternative formats and additional languages. Please email: communicationsmanchester@nhs.net or call 0161 213 1750 for more information.

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For further information and useful resources, search **Dementia United**.

This leaflet has been produced by Manchester Health and Care Commissioning on behalf of Greater Manchester Health and Social Care and Dementia United; in collaboration with Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust, The Alzheimer's Society, local support groups and people living in South Asian communities.

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