

# The health service use of people living with less common types of dementia

This fact sheet is for care partners. It provides information on:

- the main reasons that people living with less common types of dementia are admitted to hospital in New South Wales, and
- how to support people living with less common types of dementia to avoid hospital admissions.

## Types of dementia

Some types of dementia are more common, like Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia. Other types of dementia are less common, like frontotemporal dementia and alcohol-related dementia. Some of the less common types of dementia are linked to a primary diagnosis, such as Parkinson's disease dementia.



30% of people with dementia have a less common type.

## Reasons for hospital admissions

People living with less common types of dementia are most likely to be admitted to hospital for:

- Health management and rehabilitation
- An injury or poisoning (e.g. broken hip)
- Problems related to breathing
- Problems with their brain, spinal cord and nerves

## Key point

People living with less common types of dementia go to hospital for many reasons.

## Recommendations

- People living with dementia might show that they are experiencing pain or illness in different ways. You can help health professionals to understand when the person that you care for is in pain or is sick.
- If the person that you care for has a sudden change in their behaviour seek medical attention to rule out an underlying health problem.
- There is a tool available to help you and the person that you care for to talk to a GP about their health needs (<http://unsw.to/dementia-postcard>).
- Use a home safety audit tool or checklist to reduce hazards in the person's home. A GP can make a referral to an allied health professional who can help you.
- Ask the person's pharmacist to help you support the person with managing their medication.
- Contact the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500 for advice.

## Multiple health problems

People living with less common types of dementia who go to hospital for one reason, often have other health problems too. For example:

- High blood pressure
- Other problems with their brain, spinal cord or nerves
- Dehydration
- Heart problems

### Key point

People living with less common types of dementia who go to hospital have other health problems. They need access to co-ordinated care to meet their health needs.

## Recommendations

- Support the person that you care for to tell health professionals about their medical history.
- Monitor the fluid intake of the person that you support and, if required, encourage them to drink more.
- If the person that you support reports sudden severe headaches, dizziness or tingling sensations, encourage the person to see a doctor. These symptoms may be related to a serious health problem.
- Support the person to have annual health checks.

## Reasons for mental health hospital admissions

People living with less common types of dementia are most likely to be admitted to hospital mental health services for:

- Delirium: a medical condition that causes a sudden disturbance in the persons ability to think clearly and pay attention
- Mood disorders: when a person's mood is too low or too high.

### Key point

Hospital mental health services need to meet the needs of people living with less common types of dementia.

## Recommendations

- More information on delirium can be found via the links below. If you believe the person with dementia that you are supporting has delirium, call an ambulance.
- Physical, social and mental health are related. Regular exercise, contact with other people and a healthy diet can help the body and mind.

For more information and resources related to the health of people living with less common types of dementia, go to <https://health.dementia.org.au/>

The information in this fact sheet is based on research conducted by the Department of Developmental Disability Neuropsychiatry (3DN) at UNSW Sydney. For more information about 3DN's research go to: <https://www.3dn.unsw.edu.au/projects/using-big-data-understand-health-status-service-use-and-service-pathways-people-less-common-types-dementia>

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