

Time Frames: Stages of Dementia

When a loved one ages, often times they face multiple health-related issues. One possible issue is the progression of Dementia, or severe memory loss and personality change. Our Trilogy campus understands how the process of Dementia can be a tough and scary time, so we've broken down the stages. We hope that this will help you better understand what stage your loved one is in, and maybe how to handle it.

Early Stage Dementia - This often goes undiagnosed because the signs are too subtle and sometimes simply considered part of aging. Depending on what form of dementia your loved one has, you will either notice a more significant change in memory or in behavior. For example, someone with Alzheimer's disease will experience memory challenges more than behavioral challenges. Some signs of this stage are:

- They are uncertain about dates and recent happenings
- They have irritability and mood swings
- They have trouble with naming people and objects
- They start to isolate themselves more
- They react inappropriately to another's emotions

- They use harsh or abusive language or behavior
- If you notice most or all of these signs in an aging loved one, it may be time to talk to your family physician. You can also encourage your loved one to do so, but be prepared to be met with resistance. Talk to your physician and see what he or she recommends for moving forward from this point. It may also be time to assign or hire someone to assist your loved one in his or her own home.

Middle Stage Dementia - The symptoms are now more noticeable to those close to the patient, and begin to more seriously affect everyday life. Patients may become moodier and wary of the care their caregiver tries to provide them. Some signs of this stage are:

- They become lost in once well-known areas
- They have trouble comprehending and observing the world around them
- They lose their ability to learn
- They struggle with hygiene
- They become delusional, sometimes even hallucinating
- They struggle with daily tasks

- They become depressed and uninterested
- They lash out against themselves or others
- When your loved one reaches this stage, it might be time to consider either Assisted Living or a nursing home, depending on how severe the symptoms are. Research multiple assisted living and nursing homes and see what services are offered. Make sure to talk to any professionals on staff and see if they can reassure you that their facility is the correct fit for your loved one.

Late Stage Dementia - The disease is now in full swing and the severity of it is noticeable to anyone. It strongly affects all parts of the patient's life. Patients in this stage become almost totally dependent. Some signs of this stage are:

- They struggle with verbal communication and may stop talking altogether
- They lose much of their memory
- They start to lose their small motor skills
- They have trouble with moving around
- They cannot control their bodily functions
- They cannot perform any daily task
- They have trouble eating
- They may become bed-ridden and prone to infections

Once your loved one has reached this stage, you should have him or her in a facility that can provide full time care. If you have not already done this, it might be time to start researching places that offer a full range of care. Some places, like our Trilogy campus, even offer facilities specific to Memory Care.