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Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society
Nunavummi Pimmaqluktut Makinnasuaqtiit Katimayit
Soci t  Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit

Simple words and phrases for supporting a loved one with dementia

For caregivers, families, health workers, and interpreters.

Understanding dementia: key terms

Term	Meaning
Alzheimer’s disease	The most common cause of dementia. It slowly affects memory and thinking over time.
Behavioural changes	New behaviours that may seem unusual—like getting angry easily, wandering, or acting fearful.
Capacity	The ability to make decisions about your own health, money, or daily life. Some people with dementia may lose capacity over time.
Care plan	A written or spoken plan between a caregiver, the person with dementia, and health providers. It may include daily routines, safety steps, medicine, and appointments.
Caregiver	A person who helps someone with daily care. This could be a family member, friend, or health worker.
Check-up	A routine visit with a healthcare provider to talk about health concerns and do basic tests. In dementia care, this may include questions about memory, mood, and daily life.

Term	Meaning
Cognitive changes	Changes in memory, thinking, language, or problem-solving.
Cognitive screening	A short set of questions or tasks that help assess memory, attention, and thinking. It's not a full diagnosis, but it helps health workers know if more testing is needed.
Consent	Permission to receive care, services, or information. Health providers must explain things clearly, and the person must agree—if they are able to make decisions.
Dementia	A medical condition that changes how a person remembers, thinks, speaks, and behaves. It is caused by diseases in the brain.
Diagnosis	When a healthcare provider figures out what condition a person has and explains it to them.
Early diagnosis	Finding out about a disease in its early stages. With dementia, this helps the person and their family plan and get support.
Environment	The space around a person—including noise, lighting, and layout. Calm, familiar environments are helpful for people with dementia.
Familiar objects and activities	Things the person knows and remembers—like a sewing kit, a favourite song, or a familiar walking path.
Follow-up	A second appointment to check how things are going after an earlier visit or diagnosis. Often includes updates, care planning, or changes in medication.
Health centre	A local community clinic where Nunavummiut can see a nurse or doctor, refill prescriptions, and get support. Health centres are often the first step in getting help for memory concerns.

Term	Meaning
Interpreter	A person who helps translate between languages—for example, from English to Inuktitut. This is important for making sure the person and their family fully understand medical information.
Label	A word or picture on a drawer, door, or container that shows what's inside. Labels help the person find what they need more easily.
Mental wellness services	Programs that support people's emotional and mental health. These may include counselling, wellness workers, and support groups.
Mobility aid	Something that helps a person move around safely—like a walker, cane, or wheelchair.
Non-verbal communication	Communication without words—including eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice.
Progressive illness	An illness that gets worse over time. Dementia is a progressive illness.
Prompt	A short reminder or cue (spoken or visual) to help the person remember what to do next. For example: "Let's brush your teeth now."
Referral	When a healthcare provider sends the person to another healthcare provider—such as a doctor, specialist, or program—for more help or testing.
Respite	A break for the caregiver, when someone else helps with care.
Routine	A regular way of doing things each day (like meals, sleep, or hygiene). Routines help reduce confusion and stress.
Support services	Programs or people who help families—like respite care, home visits, or NDMS resources.

Term	Meaning
Support services	People or programs that help families—like home care, day programs, or NDMS resources.
Triggers	Things that cause a strong reaction, like loud noise, too many people, or sudden changes in routine.
Wandering	When someone walks away from home or gets lost without meaning to. It is common in dementia.

Common phrases used in dementia care

These phrases are helpful when talking with someone living with dementia. Keep your tone gentle and relaxed. Use gestures or pictures if needed.

- “Let’s go for a walk.”
- “It’s time for medicine.”
- “We’re going to have lunch now.”
- “Would you like to sit down here?”
- “I’m going to help you with your coat.”
- “That’s okay — we can do it together.”
- “You are safe. I’m here with you.”
- “It’s all right—we don’t have to hurry.”
- “Let’s listen to some music.”
- “Can you show me where it is?”

Repeating things calmly is okay. What matters most is the feeling of safety and connection.