

# Weapons and dementia

INFORMATION SHEET FROM THE SWEDISH DEMENTIA CENTRE

Vapen och demens • faktablad på engelska

## The symptoms prevent well-reasoned decisions

Dementia is a diagnosis for a range of symptoms which make it harder to think, plan and communicate. The symptoms are caused by various illnesses and injuries to the brain.

It is usually the memory which is first affected and it becomes more difficult to orientate oneself. Language and other mental abilities are also affected.

The symptoms of dementia become particularly noticeable in situations which involve processing a large amount of information and making quick decisions. Using a firearm is an example of such a situation.

## Risks associated with weapons for individuals with dementia

From a purely technical perspective the ability to use weapons does not automatically disappear with dementia. The problem is that the illness can cause changes in the brain which may, at an early stage, affect the ability of the individual to act, concentrate and make an accurate judgement. A person with dementia who handles a firearm risks injuring both himself/herself and others.

Dementia makes it more difficult to follow the regulations concerning how weapons should be stored. Consequently, there is a risk that the weapons fall into the wrong hands.

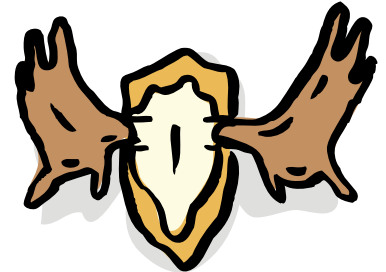
## Consultation with a doctor

A doctor should be contacted immediately if dementia is suspected. It is essential to start an examination as soon as possible in order to receive the correct diagnosis, assistance and treatment. If dementia is confirmed the doctor should be informed if the patient owns a firearm.

## When there are medical barriers

Dementia is one of the medical conditions which prohibits the continued possession of weapons. Pursuant to the Firearms Act, it is incumbent on the doctor to

assess whether a patient should not possess a firearm due to medical reasons. If this is the case, the patient should be informed about this. The doctor is also responsible for notifying the police authority who then makes a decision as to the continued possession of the firearm/s and weapon/s licence.



The police authority's administrator may also provide advice and assistance with the practical issues resulting from the withdrawal of a weapons licence.

## A sensitive issue

The restriction on the continued possession of a weapon can be a sensitive issue effecting identity and self-esteem. Elk-hunting during the autumn is, for many individuals, a highlight of the year which represents excitement, a sense of fellowship and tradition. It is therefore advisable that family and friends are involved at an early stage in the discussion concerning the continued possession of weapons. Perhaps the individual can assume a new role in the hunting team.

## Additional information

*Notification of patients who are unsuitable for possessing firearms due to medical reasons*, The National Board of Health and Welfare's regulation 2008:21

• [www.socialstyrelsen.se](http://www.socialstyrelsen.se)

*The Firearms Act*, The Swedish Code of Statutes (1996:97) • [www.notisium.se](http://www.notisium.se)

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Additional information sheets in different languages are available on the Swedish Dementia Centre's website:  
[www.demenscentrum.se/Faktablad](http://www.demenscentrum.se/Faktablad)

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