

# Cognitive support with dementia

INFORMATION SHEET FROM THE SWEDISH DEMENTIA CENTRE

Kognitivt stöd vid demens • faktablad på engelska

## Dementia makes everyday living more difficult

Dementia is a common, collective name for symptoms which affect the memory, ability to think, language and other so called cognitive abilities. Causes are different injuries and illnesses to and in the brain. Dementia illnesses, also called cognitive illnesses, make what are normally simple tasks more difficult and can eventually make it difficult to cope at all.

## Cognitive support can vary

Cognitive support can help people with dementia in the same way, for example, a walker (zimmer) can compensate for a physical disability. Cognitive support can be adjustments in the home so that, in spite of the illness, it is possible to cope, perhaps with help from a relative. It can also consist of cognitive aids that help the memory and make it possible to be more active and interactive for a longer period of time.

## Simple adjustments in the home

A usual and easy adjustment is to put away a number of things in the home. Fewer things around make it easier to concentrate and to do the right thing. Using kitchen appliances and household machines can be made easier to use by marking buttons in contrasting colours. Even colour marking door and shower handles can help.

It is easier to find the way to the bathroom at night if the bathroom light is left on and the door is slightly ajar. Times to do things and things to do can be written on a whiteboard (notice board). The door of the fridge is usually a good place for this.

## More examples of cognitive support

A whiteboard is just one example of cognitive support and can be bought in shops. Other examples are wireless (electronic) finders, remote controls

and mobile phones with simple functions and distinct buttons.

There are also a number of cognitive aids that occupational therapists can evaluate and try out. For example electronic calendars, mobile alarms and stove guards. Other aids are a direct support for relatives or carers.

## Don't wait to use aids

One can believe that it is better to wait as long as possible with cognitive support until it seems absolutely necessary. In reality it is the opposite. This is because the ability to learn gradually worsens with a dementia illness. It is necessary to learn how aids work and how to use them. The sooner this can happen the greater the possibility that the user will have use of them later.

## Tailor made support

There is no cognitive support that suits all. Symptoms with dementia illnesses can vary and in addition change over a period of time. Cognitive support needs should therefore be tailor made and adjusted to each person's needs and wishes. Occupational therapists can help with this.

## Contact an occupational therapist!

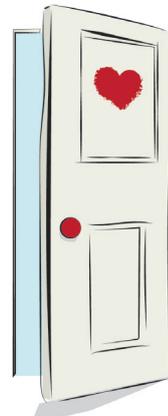
After a home visit an occupational therapist can give advice on cognitive support and help with adjustments in the home. They can also prescribe and test cognitive aids. Cognitive support needs to be followed up and evaluated as the needs of the user change over the course of time.

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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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