

**NC Department of
Health and Human Services
NC Nurse Aide I Curriculum**

**Module T
Dementia and Alzheimer's
Disease**

July 2024

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Objective

1. Define dementia, Alzheimer's disease, and delirium
2. Identify common types of dementia
3. Describe the 3 stages of Alzheimer's disease
4. Describe the nurse aide's role in the care of residents diagnosed with dementia


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Dementia

A progressive condition, more commonly marked by the development of multiple cognitive deficits:

- Memory impairment
- Aphasia
- Inability to plan and initiate complex behavior



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Common Types of Dementia

- Alzheimer's disease
- Vascular dementia
- Dementia with Lewy body
- Mixed dementia


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Alzheimer's Disease

- Progressive disease
- Rate of progression varies
- On average after diagnosis live three to eleven years
- Degree of impairment at diagnosis can affect life expectancy

Progression of Alzheimer's Disease



Healthy Brain Mild Alzheimer's Disease Severe Alzheimer's Disease

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Early-Stage Alzheimer's (Mild) Signs and Symptoms

- Difficulty with remembering names and using words
- Having difficulty performing tasks at home or work
- Not recalling read material
- Losing or misplacing items
- Difficulty with organizing or planning

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Middle-Stage Alzheimer's (Moderate) Signs and Symptoms

- Forgetting current or past events
- Displaying behaviors of withdrawal and changes in mood
- Unable to recall address or telephone number
- Not oriented to person, place or time

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Middle-Stage Alzheimer's (Moderate) Signs and Symptoms

- Requires assistance with choosing appropriate clothing for the occasion or weather
- Occasional incontinence
- Sleep pattern disturbances
- Wandering
- Changes in behavior and personality

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Late-Stage Alzheimer's (Severe) Signs and Symptoms

- 24-hour care required for personal needs
- Difficulty with sitting, walking, and swallowing
- Communication challenges
- At risk for infections, especially pneumonia.


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Delirium

State of severe and sudden confusion



- Triggered by acute illness or change in physical condition
- Can be life threatening if not recognized and treated
- Reversible



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Dementia or Delirium?



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Respect and Dementia



Dementia does not eliminate the basic need to be respected by others



Person-centered care maintains and supports the person regardless of level of dementia

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Dignity and Dementia

Dementia does not eliminate the resident's basic human need to be treated with dignity

As the disease progresses, adjustments will be required to maintain dignity

Important for staff to know who the resident was before the diagnosis of dementia

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Communicating with Residents with Dementia

Dementia gradually diminishes a person's ability to communicate and becomes more difficult during the progression of the disease

- Requires patience, understanding, and good listening skills
- May exhibit difficulty making wishes known and understanding spoken words

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Communication Strategies and Tips in Dementia Care

- The use of the following can redirect the resident and manage escalating behavior positively and proactively:
 - Positive tone
 - Medium volume
 - Simple sentences
 - Rapport-building conversations
 - Open body language
 - Avoidance of distractions
 - Creative problem solving
- A combination of the above techniques will be most effective in managing escalating behavior

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Dementia - Behavioral Issues

- The normal brain controls responses
- All behavior is a response to a need
- Resident's behavior should be recorded based on observations
- Residents with dementia typically have lost much of their ability to control responses
- Common behaviors include sundowning, wandering, repetition, aggression and anger

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Nurse Aide Stress and Burnout

The goal in caring for residents with dementia is to give the support needed to be able to participate in the world around them to the best of their ability



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Nurse Aide Stress and Burnout

- Providing care on daily basis for residents with dementia can be stressful
- Residents with dementia may be more prone than others to becoming victims of abuse or neglect
- Nurse aides must take the necessary steps to ensure they do not react in an unprofessional manner

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