THE Courtyard at FITCHBURG
ASSISTED LIVING & MEMORY CARE

WARNING SIGNS OF DEMENTIA

A Guide for Families in Fitchburg, WI

Noticing changes in a loved one's memory can be difficult for the whole family, but this guide can help you spot patterns and point you to the next steps in your loved one's care.



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Part 1: Early Warning Signs of Dementia

Check off signs you notice and use the notes section to write down real-world examples. These can help keep track of triggers and tell a physician more about what's going on.

Memory and Orientation

- ☐ Forgets recently learned information or important dates
- ☐ Asks the same question repeatedly
- ☐ Loses track of the current time, date, or season
- ☐ Forgets where they are or how they got there

Everyday Judgment

- ☐ Shows difficulty following recipes, tracking bills, or working through multistep tasks
- ☐ Struggles with familiar tasks like remembering known routes or familiar games
- ☐ Demonstrates poor judgment with money
- ☐ Wears the same clothes for days, fails to notice a smell, or forgets to bathe
- ☐ Puts items in unusual places and has trouble retracing steps

Communication and Perception

- ☐ Stops mid-conversation and cannot continue
- ☐ Uses unusual words for familiar objects
- ☐ Fails to judge distance, discern colors, or read text
- ☐ Accuses people of stealing from them or hiding something

Mood and Personality

- ☐ Avoids hobbies, projects, or social gatherings they used to enjoy
- ☐ Demonstrates feelings of confusion, fear, depression, or anxiety
- ☐ Acts noticeably different when removed from a familiar setting
- ☐ Responds to everyday situations with unwarranted anger or irritation

Any of these signs could warrant a conversation with a physician, especially if you notice a progression or an impact on daily well-being.

However, these signs are not a diagnosis. They can indicate things other than dementia, so it's important to continue investigating to rule out other possibilities.

Part 2: How to Compare Dementia vs. Normal Aging

This chart can help you and your family differentiate normal signs of aging from potential signs of dementia. Check off the rows where a symptom could be a warning sign to discuss with a physician.

Typical Age-Related Change	Possible Warning Sign of Dementia
Forgetting names or appointments, then remembering them later	Forgetting recently learned information without remembering it or asking the same questions repeatedly
Making an occasional error when balancing the checkbook or paying a bill	No longer being able to follow a familiar recipe or remember which bills to pay
Making an occasional error when balancing the checkbook or paying a bill	No longer being able to follow a familiar recipe or remember which bills to pay
Occasionally needing help with microwave settings or recording a show	Being unable to drive to a familiar place or finish a routine task
Getting confused about the day of the week, then remembering	Losing track of dates and seasons or forgetting where they are
Not being able to read text on screen or see details, which can be cataract-related	Trouble telling colors apart, judging distance, or reading text at all
Sometimes having trouble finding the right word	Stopping mid-conversation, repeating themselves, or misnaming familiar objects
Misplacing things now and then, then retracing steps to find them later	Putting items in odd places and being unable to retrace steps
Making a questionable decision or mistake once in a while	Poor judgment with money or grooming they would not have shown before
Sometimes feeling uninterested in family or social obligations	Pulling away from hobbies, work, and social life
Having set ways of doing things and getting irritable when a routine changes	Becoming suspicious, fearful, anxious, or easily upset in an uncharacteristic way

This chart is not an exact science and should not replace the advice of a physician.

Part 3: Local Resources in Fitchburg, WI

Decisions related to memory care can be painful, but families in Fitchburg, WI, can lean on these resources to find answers:

- **The Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)** of Dane County offers free, unbiased help with understanding care options, benefits, and next steps for families. Dane County dementia care specialists work directly with families. You can call (608) 240-7400 for more information.

- **The Alzheimer's Association, Wisconsin Chapter** offers a free 24/7 Helpline that connects you with specialists for reliable information and crisis help in more than 200 languages. Call (800) 272-3900 at any hour of any day. The chapter also runs local support groups, education programs, and online tools for caregivers.

- **The Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute** provides resources to local families through the University of Wisconsin-Madison, connecting them with senior centers, research centers, institutes, social events, and more. Email them at wai@medicine.wisc.edu to learn more.

- **The Courtyard at Fitchburg** is a local assisted living and memory care community offering family support groups, short-term respite stays to give caregivers a break, and educational sessions on dementia care. Schedule a visit to speak with a team member and talk through your options without pressure.

This guide should not replace medical advice. Talk with your doctor regarding any issues you or a loved one may experience, especially if you suspect memory loss, dementia, or Alzheimer's.

Notes: