



Zoe Birch is a Chartered Physiotherapist and founder of PhysioMotion, which operate a clinic at Green Park as well as providing physiotherapy at home. This article discusses Dementia, a disease that affects a vast amount of people, directly or indirectly, in the UK.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT DEMENTIA

**T**here are around 900,000 people in the UK that are living with dementia and many of us are ill-informed of the disease.

We associate it with memory loss, inability to maintain independence and for some a death sentence.

Like many diseases, dementia has progressive changes and if it is diagnosed early and managed well many people can maintain their independence and slow the progress of the disease.

For someone living with dementia, the worst thing is adapt life immediately in preparation for the future changes. The best way is to continuously assess the support required as the needs change - this also includes someone supporting or living with someone that has dementia. It is very easy to take over as you want to 'help', but this can have a negative effect and cause the disease to progress quicker.

### DIFFERENT TYPES OF DEMENTIA

There are many types of dementia and the most common are:

1. Alzheimer's disease
2. Vascular dementia
3. Lewy body
4. Young onset dementia
5. Frontotemporal dementia

You can also get dementia related to other health conditions such as: Parkinson's Disease, alcoholism and Huntington's Disease. To learn more about the different types, visit: [www.dementiauk.com](http://www.dementiauk.com).

### HOW PHYSIO CAN HELP AT DIFFERENT STAGES

Initially Physiotherapy may not be required, but we are a great source of information as to what physical activities can be performed to change the trajectory of the disease. For example, physiotherapy can provide a range of

support from exercise programmes keeping the body strong and mobile to activities challenging brain function.

As the disease progresses, certain activities may become difficult and we can be called upon to assess these changes and provide more up to date advice, exercise programmes and support.

It's important that someone living with dementia is allowed to perform tasks for themselves for as long as possible. This will help maintain their physical ability, but also keep their sense of purpose.

This is preferable to giving them heavy support or performing the tasks for them.



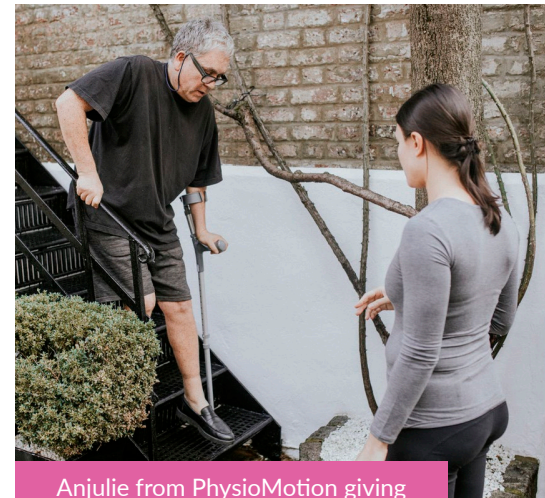
Exercise can be beneficial and comes in many forms.

### BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

Exercise for people living with dementia can come in many forms from walking and gym work to dancing and gardening.

The health benefits include:

- Improved mood
- Better sleep
- Reduced likelihood of constipation
- Maintenance of motor skills
- Reduced risk of falls because of improved strength and balance
- Reduced rate of disease-associated mental decline
- Improved memory
- Improved behaviour, such as reduced rate of wandering, swearing and acting aggressively
- Better communication and social skills



Anjolie from PhysioMotion giving mobility assistance advice.

### OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Dementia doesn't just affect our physical ability and memory, as it changes all functions of the brain that controls all areas of our body.

Here are some other areas that should be thought of during the progression of the disease:

- Vision
- Hearing
- Eating and nutrition
- Smell
- Touch
- Immunity

Understanding how dementia progresses and what living with dementia is like, can help improve connections, improve the support provided and help patience. But even if we do understand, caring for someone or living with dementia can be hard and frustrating.

*Please, take advantage of the support that's out there.*

**PhysioMotion**

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