



## Dementia-Friendly Restaurants

Dining out is an important social activity for many people. For those with dementia, however, going out to eat can be stressful and overwhelming. These customers may have special needs and can require additional support to enjoy their dining experiences. While it may occur anywhere from rarely to frequently, restaurant professionals and wait staff are likely to encounter customers with dementia in the course of their work. In fact, 70 percent of people with dementia live within the community rather than in an adult care facility. As a dementia-friendly business, your restaurant can provide a higher level of customer service to all members of the community.

### WHAT IS DEMENTIA?

Dementia is a term used to describe the symptoms of more than 100 conditions that are characterized by a decline in memory or other thinking skills that affect a person's ability to perform everyday activities.

### SIGNS OF DEMENTIA

Many dementias are progressive, with signs and symptoms starting out slowly and gradually getting worse. While symptoms of dementia can vary greatly, at least two of the following core mental functions must be significantly impaired to be considered dementia:

- Judgment
- Perception
- Reasoning
- Organizational abilities
- Memory
- Abstract thinking
- Communication and language
- Ability to focus and pay attention
- Orientation to time and place
- Awareness of socially appropriate norms
- Ability to filter emotional responses

### WHAT IS A DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY BUSINESS?

Dementia-friendly businesses recognize the challenges that accompany dementia and help enable people with dementia to have a good quality of life. Their personnel are able to recognize the signs of dementia, communicate with people with dementia, and locate resources and assistance for themselves and for the people they serve.

### DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY BUSINESS GUIDELINES

- Train all members of management and at least 50 percent of front-line staff.
- Designate a team leader to speak on behalf of the business.
- Be open to discussions regarding environment changes (lighting, signage, etc.).
- Share all training materials with new hires and those unable to attend the in-person trainings.
- Encourage all new employees to take the free, 20-minute online training found at [www.uwosh.edu/dementia](http://www.uwosh.edu/dementia), listed under "Additional Courses" in the left navigation.



## DEMENTIA IN RESTAURANTS

Dementia can make ordering food, casual social conversation, and finding and returning from the restroom challenging. Restroom signs in different themes, such as roosters and hens rather than men and women, can be confusing. The size and scope of the menu can be overwhelming, and individuals with dementia may forget what they have ordered. Difficulty in ordering and repeating questions and requests of wait staff can be frustrating for both staff and customers.

Training staff to provide dementia-friendly customer service and to understand the challenges facing people with dementia will help alleviate many issues. Wait staff can assist customers with dementia by asking questions about the kinds of food they like to narrow possible options in ordering. Directional signage for the restrooms should be clearly placed in key visual areas and be easily understood. Restroom doors must be clearly labeled with a sign placed directly on the door.

In order to ease the dining experience, consider making the menu accessible online to provide customers with dementia the option to choose their meal ahead of time with the assistance of their caregiver or dining companion. Minimizing the number of items placed on the table, such as jellies, sugar bowls, or knickknacks, can be helpful in preventing customers with dementia from becoming distracted or overwhelmed. Above all else, understanding and patience are essential in providing the highest level of customer service to people with dementia and their companions.

## RESOURCES

For more information on dementia and how to become dementia-friendly, visit:

- Is It Dementia: A Resource for Recognizing the Signs of Dementia  
<http://isitdementia.com.au>
- A Toolkit for Building Dementia-Friendly Communities  
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p01000.pdf>
- Adult Protective Services  
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/aps/index.htm>
- Dementia Care Specialist  
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/dementia-care-specialist-program.htm>
- Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)  
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/consumer/index.htm>
- Alzheimer's Association  
[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)
- Alzheimer's and Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin  
[www.alzwisc.org](http://www.alzwisc.org)
- CDC Healthy Brain Initiative  
[www.cdc.gov/aging/healthybrain](http://www.cdc.gov/aging/healthybrain)

