

UNDERSTANDING THE DISEASE · FREE COMPANION TOOL

Questions to ask at the appointment

The visit is short, you're rattled, and half your questions evaporate the moment you sit down. Bring this. The right question at the right visit is the difference between leaving with a plan and leaving with a pamphlet. Circle your top three before you walk in.

A Before you walk in

- ☐ **Bring someone with you.** Two sets of ears. One person listens, one person takes notes.
- ☐ **Bring what you've actually seen.** Specific moments and dates beat "they're more forgetful." Write them down beforehand.
- ☐ **Bring the complete medication list** — everything, including supplements and anything over-the-counter.

B About the diagnosis

- 1 Which type of dementia is this, and how confident are you?**
Alzheimer's, Lewy body, vascular, and frontotemporal are managed differently. The type shapes everything.
- 2 What have you ruled out that could look like this but be reversible?**
Thyroid, B12, medication interactions, and depression can all mimic dementia. Make sure they were checked.
- 3 What stage are we at — and what does that mean for their day to day?**
A stage is only useful if you know what it changes this month.

C About treatment

- 4 What are the options, and what should we realistically expect from them?**
Ask what "working" would even look like — and how you'd know.
- 5 What are the side effects, and what would make us stop?**
- 6 Do the newer drugs — Leqembi, Kisunla — apply to us? If not, why not?**
Know whether they're an option for their specific type and stage, and what they cost.
- 7 Could any of their current medications be making the memory worse?**
Some common prescriptions cloud thinking in older adults. Ask directly.

Where Quality of Life Counts

Educational information from Senior Advocators Inc. It is not medical advice and does not create a clinical relationship. Bring your questions to your parent's licensed physician.

D About what's ahead

8

What changes should I expect over the next 6 to 12 months?

You can't prepare for what no one names. Ask them to be honest with you.

9

What symptoms mean I should call you — and what counts as an emergency?

Get the line between "mention it next visit" and "go to the ER" in writing.

10

When do we need to talk about driving, and about safety at home?

Better to hear it from the doctor than to fight about it at the kitchen table.

E Before you leave the room

11

Who do I call between visits, and how quickly do you respond?

Know your lifeline before the 2 a.m. moment when you need it.

12

If this were your own parent, what's the first thing you would do?

The single most useful question in the room. It gets you past the textbook to the honest answer.

One thing to do the moment you get to the car

Before it fades, write down the three things the doctor said that mattered most — and the one thing you didn't understand. That last one becomes your first question next time.

When you leave with answers but no plan

A doctor tells you what's happening. What to *do* about it — for your parent, your job, your family — is a different conversation. **A consultation with Ginell Butler, MAASM, MSA** turns the diagnosis into a plan you can actually follow. senioradvocators.org

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