

Health assessments for people living with dementia

Annual health assessments for people aged 75 years or older allow in-depth checks of physical, psychological, and social functioning.

The aim of the assessment is to identify

- complex health problems
- functional abilities
- mental health
- social support needs, and
- to initiate appropriate preventive and educational strategies to improve health and prevent functional decline

Annual health assessments may be valuable for people living with dementia who have multiple complex health and social care needs.



Health assessments can help people to:

- live longer with good physical function and better mental health
- live longer at home
- access more primary care services for medications, diagnostic tests, and chronic disease management
- keep up to date with immunisation

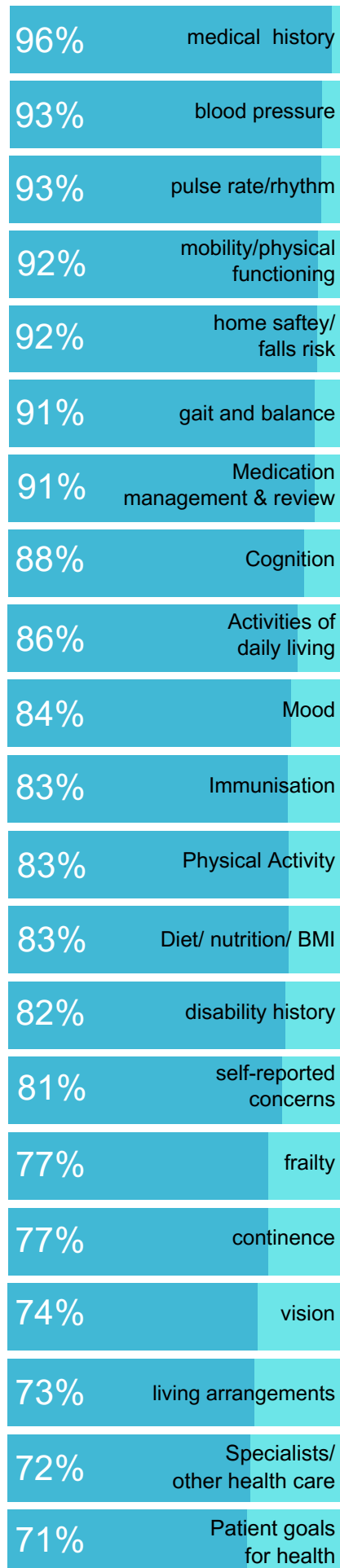
We need to improve health assessments for older people by:

More people having health assessments,
Repeating and comparing assessments from year to year,
Identifying and anticipating needs, and
Ensuring **adequate follow-up**

What should be included in a Health

Assessment?

Percentage of GPs rating assessment items as essential



General Practitioners Agree

Health Assessments provide opportunity for monitoring and acting on changes in physical and cognitive health.



Assessment helps to get a whole picture, rather than concentrating on one problem at a time.

General Practitioners estimate it should take 65 minutes to assess all the items they considered essential.

Practitioners were not in general agreement about assessing:

Sleep patterns - a risk for dementia, and a marker for other conditions

Feet - important for mobility, and a sign of overall health

Skin - for infection or pressure injury

Hearing - limiting social engagement, and a risk for dementia

Oral Health - important for nutrition and molecular health

Nausea/vomiting - may be associated with medications

Constipation - can compromise cognitive function

Fatigue - may limit activity, and can be a marker for other conditions.

Assessment by a nurse

Nurses were more likely to focus on social factors, including social support, community connections, how people were managing at home, and how they feel about their life.



Assessment by a doctor

General Practitioners tended to have a focus on medical issues.

INFORMATION SOURCES

BBytes J, Cavenagh D, Bryant J, Carey M, Mazza D, Sanson-Fisher R. (2023). Do health assessments affect time to permanent residential aged care admission for older women with and without dementia? *Geriatrics & gerontology international*. 2023;23(8):595-602. DOI: [10.1111/ggi.14631](https://doi.org/10.1111/ggi.14631)

Bytes J, Cavenagh D, Bryant J, Mazza D, Browning C, O'Loughlin S, et al. (2021). Use of medical services by older Australian women with dementia: a longitudinal cohort study. *Australian and New Zealand journal of public health*. 2021;45(5):497-503. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.13146>

Carey M, Zucca A, Rhee J, Sanson-Fisher R, Norton G, Oldmeadow C, et al. (2021). Essential components of health assessment for older people in primary care: a cross-sectional survey of Australian general practitioners. *Australian and New Zealand journal of public health*. 2021;45(5):506-11. DOI: [10.1111/1753-6405.13108](https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.13108)

Dolja-Gore X, Byles JE, Tavener MA, Chojenta CL, Majeed T, Nair BR, Mishra GD. (2021). Estimating the effect of health assessments on mortality, physical functioning and health care utilisation for women aged 75 years and older. *PLoS ONE*, 2021. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0249207 <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0249207>

White J, Norton G, Pond D, Khaing K, Dolja-Gore X, Byles J, & Carey M. (2024). General practitioner and practice nurses perspectives on implementation of the 75+ health assessment: Implications for dementia care and well-being. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 00, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.16354>



The National Dementia Helpline
Free call 1800 100 500
Email helpline@dementia.org.au

Useful links from the Dementia Australia website:

<https://www.dementia.org.au/>

<https://www.dementia.org.au/about-dementia/testing-and-diagnosis>



MORE FROM



www.dementiaaccord.org.au