



# Accommodating Employees with Early Onset Dementia



While much less prevalent in adults younger than 65, dementia can strike people in their prime working years. Early onset dementia, also known as young onset dementia, can impact people in their 30s, 40s and 50s and accounts for an estimated 2% to 8% of all dementia cases, according to the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

People often worry that memory lapses such as forgetting where you parked your car, the name of an acquaintance or what you were looking for after you entered that room are signs of early dementia, but they are actually a normal part of aging. However, when memory issues start to affect our ability to focus and complete daily tasks, it may be time to see your doctor.

As an employer or manager, if you have concerns about an employee's performance or if an employee advises you that he or she has been diagnosed with early onset dementia, there are steps you can take to help the individual continue to work and contribute to your business or organization as long as possible.

This will not only benefit your employee and help you retain an experienced worker, it is also a requirement under human rights laws in Canada unless it would cause "undue hardship" to your business. Canada's Constitution guarantees equality before the law, and provincial and territorial human rights laws prohibit discrimination in employment.

## Signs an employee may have early onset dementia

- has difficulty with routine tasks
- forgets appointments and work deadlines
- repeatedly asks the same questions
- gets lost or confused in familiar environments
- displays poor or decreased judgement
- struggles to follow directions
- exhibits changes in mood, behaviour and personality
- has decreased language skills
- struggles to concentrate

## What to do if you notice changes in your employee's performance

If you notice that an employee who has been a consistently strong performer is exhibiting any of the signs above, here are some steps you can take:

- sit down with the employee to discuss these performance changes
- ask if the employee is aware of these changes and if he/she feels disorganized or anxious as a result
- ask if the employee is able to speak with a family physician about how he/she is managing
- suggest a third party medical assessment and a doctor-to-doctor (D2D) call with his/her family physician. This will keep the person's medical information and care private.
- request the employee's consent for the company's outsourced doctor to provide information to you on how best to support him/her in the workplace

## What to do if an employee advises you he/she has early onset dementia

- ask for the employee's consent to speak with his/her doctor to help you understand what modifications in the workplace could help his/her performance or have your company's outsourced physician make that call
- make adjustments to the employee's tasks to enhance routine and reduce variability
- match tasks with his/her abilities and skills
- provide a quiet work environment with as few distractions as possible
- have regular check-in meetings to discuss performance and make adjustments to job requirements (cognitive and physical) as necessary

To find out more, contact Bayshore at

**1.844.203.4534**

[employer@bayshore.ca](mailto:employer@bayshore.ca)

Bayshore Therapy & Rehab, a division of Bayshore HealthCare, assists Canadians to achieve maximum function and independence through physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology and rehabilitation services. These services are designed to help people overcome injuries, illnesses and disabilities and are delivered in home, workplace, school or residential settings.

## Contact Bayshore for expert advice.

Bayshore Therapy & Rehab can work with you to help accommodate an employee with early onset dementia. These services can be provided in home and in workplace settings.

We specialize in:

- disability management programs
- vocational assessments and physician support
- functional abilities evaluations
- job demands analyses
- occupational therapy and other workplace services to keep employees safe and productive.

 **Bayshore**<sup>®</sup>  
Therapy & Rehab

[www.bayshore.ca](http://www.bayshore.ca)

