

SUNCREST HOSPICE

FAST Scale for Dementia

Functional Assessment Staging Tool - Quick Reference Guide

7 Stages of Dementia Progression

Stage	Classification	Clinical Description & Observable Behaviors
1	No Functional Decline	No difficulty either subjectively or objectively. Normal adult functioning. No memory complaints beyond normal age-related forgetfulness.
2	Very Mild Decline	Complains of forgetting location of objects. Subjective word-finding difficulties. No objective deficits in employment or social situations. Appropriate concern about symptoms.
3	Mild Cognitive Decline	Decreased job functioning evident to coworkers. Difficulty traveling to new locations. Decreased organizational capacity (planning, shopping, finances).
4	Moderate Cognitive Decline	Decreased ability to perform complex tasks: planning dinner for guests, handling personal finances (forgetting to pay bills), difficulty with marketing, planning outings.
5	Moderately Severe Decline	Requires assistance in choosing proper clothing to wear for the day, season, or occasion. May wear the same clothing repeatedly unless supervised. Can still bathe, toilet, and eat independently.
6	Severe Cognitive Decline	Progresses through substages in order: 6a: Improperly putting on clothes without assistance (street clothes over pajamas, shoes on wrong feet, difficulty with buttons). 6b: Unable to bathe properly (difficulty adjusting bath water temperature, fear of bathing). 6c: Inability to handle mechanics of toileting (forgets to flush, doesn't wipe properly). 6d: Urinary incontinence (occasionally or more frequently). 6e: Fecal incontinence (occasionally or more frequently).
7	Very Severe Decline (End-Stage)	Progresses through substages in order: 7a: Speech limited to approximately 6 or fewer intelligible words per day. 7b: Speech limited to single intelligible word (may repeat it). 7c: Ambulatory ability lost (cannot walk without personal assistance). 7d: Cannot sit up without assistance (will fall over if not positioned). 7e: Loss of ability to smile. 7f: Loss of ability to hold head up independently.

How to Use This Scale:

- Observe the individual's functional abilities over several days for accurate assessment
- Assign stage based on the highest level of consistent functional impairment
- Stages 6 and 7: Individual progresses through substages (a→b→c→d→e→f) in order
- Focus on what the person CAN and CANNOT do independently, not cognitive testing
- Document changes over time to track disease progression

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FAST Scale - Scoring Guide & Clinical Notes

Stage-by-Stage Timeline (Average Durations)

Stage	Classification	Average Duration	Care Needs
1-2	No/Very Mild Decline	Variable (years)	Independent
3	Mild Decline	2-7 years	Minimal supervision
4	Moderate Decline	~2 years	Help with complex tasks
5	Moderately Severe	~1.5 years	Supervision + assistance
6	Severe Decline	~2-2.5 years	Extensive assistance
7	Very Severe (End-Stage)	1-3 years	Total care, hospice appropriate

Hospice Eligibility Guidelines for Dementia

Medicare Hospice Criteria for Dementia:

- **FAST Stage 7c or beyond** (cannot walk without assistance)
- **PLUS one of the following within the past 12 months:**
 - Aspiration pneumonia
 - Pyelonephritis or other upper urinary tract infection
 - Sepsis
 - Stage 3-4 pressure ulcers
 - Recurrent fever after antibiotics
 - 10% weight loss in 6 months or serum albumin <2.5

When to Contact Hospice

Consider hospice consultation when:

- Individual reaches Stage 6e-7 with declining function
- Recurrent infections or hospitalizations occur
- Weight loss continues despite nutrition efforts
- Quality of life becomes the primary concern
- Family needs additional support for end-of-life care

Hospice provides: Pain management, symptom control, nursing care, personal care assistance, emotional/spiritual support, respite care for family, bereavement counseling, all medications and equipment related to terminal diagnosis.

Clinical Notes & Observations:

Date: _____ Current FAST Stage: _____

Assessed by: _____

Specific observations:

Need Help Understanding Your Loved One's Stage?

Our compassionate team can help you assess dementia progression, understand care options, and determine when hospice may be appropriate.

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