

# Comfort Blanket

## How to support patients with Dementia by creating a textured blanket



### What is a comfort blanket?

It's a handmade blanket made with different textured materials and decorated with buttons, zips and other objects, to help busy hands of a Dementia or Alzheimer's patient.



### Comfort

A person with Dementia does not respond well to changes in environment, so coming into hospital is an extremely distressing time. The bright lights and confusing noises in a hospital can also make the environment feel even more alien. Giving a patient something that they can find comfort in and interact with is exactly what the comfort blankets and comfort mitts are all about. Dementia and Alzheimer's patients can find comfort from a lap-sized comfort blanket or comfort mitt.

During the later stages, a patient's hands fidget as though agitated or searching for something to hold on to. The person with the condition will often pull on their clothes or bedding, rub their hands up and down, or even rummage through their bag or purse.

Providing patients with either a comfort blanket or comfort mitt allows their hands to explore the different textures and play with objects – this brings patients a sense of calm and security, and makes a positive difference in their behaviour.

Each blanket is given to a patient in need, and they will be able to take the blanket home with them when they leave our care.

## How can you help this project?

You can contribute to the comfort blankets or comfort mitts by donating any of the following items:

- Material, wadding, felt, crochet or knitted items, wool, pompoms from clothes
- Baby grow bags, old clothes (waistcoats, dungarees, shirts, anything with pockets, etc.)
- Fasteners – snaps, velcro, snap tape, eyelets, buckles, clips from bags
- Trimmings, fringes, braids, bows, roses, embroidery patches, tassels
- ribbon (no wire inside), shoe laces (plastic ends removed), zips, buttons, beads (plastic or wooden), unused bath loofas
- Soft toys (small/ medium)
- Baby toys – sensory items from play gyms, rattles with tethers, orbit ball, wrist etc., cloth books, plastic rings, spiral cot/pram wraparounds, twisty rings, soft chime balls, cloth textured cubes.

**But even better... have a go and make one – it's fun!**

## Comfort blanket instructions

**To make your own blanket**, you can either sew by hand or sewing machine, or even try crocheting or knitting a comfort mitt. Any level of ability can give it a go by following these tips:

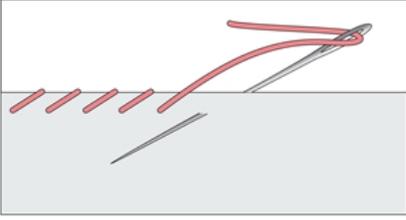
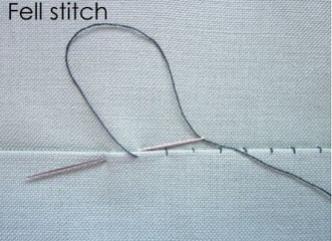
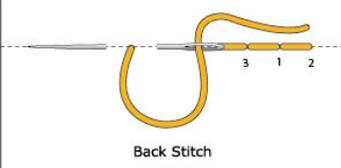
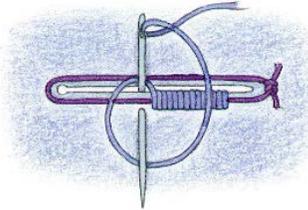
### Essential must-haves:

- Everything must be double or tripled stitched to prevent it from being removed and swallowed.
- Fabric ties need to be added to the side of the fabric so the blanket can be tied to a bed or chair.
- Typical size 20" x 20" (50 x 50 cm)
- Ribbon ends need to be folded over and sewn to prevent fraying.



## Techniques for sewing by hand

**Securing the thread:** Hand stitches need to be secured at the beginning and the end of a stitch to prevent them coming undone. This can be done by hand tying the ends.

<p><b>Whip Stitch</b> – Used to prevent fraying. The stitches should be about 1/16" apart, and only as deep as necessary to create a firm seam.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring needle up at 1 and down at 2 making sure to pierce both pieces of fabric to bind together.</li> <li>• Bring needle back up at 3 and down 4, continue stitching the seam.</li> <li>• <b>Tip:</b> Leave a tail of thread when you start, and work several stitches over it to secure and hide the thread.</li> </ul>	 <p>A diagram showing a needle and thread creating a whip stitch. The thread forms a series of overlapping loops that bind two pieces of fabric together. The needle is shown entering and exiting the fabric at specific points to form each loop.</p>
<p><b>Fell Stitch</b> – A strong, secure stitch to hold two layers permanently together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work from right to left.</li> <li>• Make a short, straight stitch at the edge of the fabric.</li> </ul>	<p>Fell stitch</p>  <p>A photograph showing a close-up of a needle and thread performing a fell stitch along the edge of a piece of fabric. The thread forms a series of overlapping loops that catch the edge of the fabric.</p>
<p><b>Back Stitch</b> – A strong stitch used to construct a piece of work – outlining, straight and curved lines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work from right to left.</li> <li>• Bring needle up at 1 and back down at 2.</li> <li>• Move left and bring needle up at 3, then back down at 1. Continue stitching.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tips:</b> Make shorter stitches for curved lines and shape</p>	 <p>Back Stitch</p> <p>A diagram illustrating the back stitch. It shows a needle and thread forming a series of overlapping loops. The thread enters at point 1, goes down at point 2, then up at point 3, and finally down at point 1. The diagram is labeled 'Back Stitch'.</p>
<p><b>Buttonhole Stitch</b> – Used for hand-worked buttonholes, controls fraying and creates a decorative edge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put the needle under and through the fabric edge</li> <li>• Loop the thread around the needle point, and pull the needle through.</li> <li>• Tighten the thread, positioning the "knot" of the stitch at the fabric edge.</li> </ul>	 <p>A photograph showing a needle and thread performing a buttonhole stitch. The thread forms a series of overlapping loops that create a decorative edge along the fabric.</p>

## Sewing Machine Techniques

**Securing the thread:** Machine stitches need to be secured at the end of a stitch to prevent them coming undone. On sewing machines you can use a reverse stitch or locking stitch, which stitches three or four stitches in the same place.

<p><b>Reverse Stitch / Locking stitch:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Start by stitching a couple of stitches forward, then press on the reverse button or locking stitch and reverse over the stitches already done and then continue forwards again.</li> <li>2. At the send of stitches, reverse again to secure the stitches.</li> </ol> <p><b>Tie the ends:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pull on the top tread and it will pull up a loop – this is the bobbin thread.</li> <li>2. Pull the loop through to the top.</li> <li>3. Tie the two threads together.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Straight Stitch</b> – used for most applications</p>	
<p><b>3 Thread Overlock Stitch</b> – Stitched using three treads on the overlocker. Used to neaten the edge of fabric to prevent fraying.</p>	<p>* 3-thread overlock</p> 
<p><b>Zigzag Stitch</b> – To neaten seam edges and for securing and decorative purposes.</p>	

## Fabric Techniques

<p><b>Tucks</b> – A tuck is a decorative addition to any piece of fabric. Tucks are made by stitching evenly spaced folds into the fabric.</p>	
<p><b>Pleats</b> – A pleat is a fold or series of folds in fabric.</p>	
<p>Gathers, ruffles, and piped edges can also be used, or add a flat trim (braid or ribbon) for a decorative effect – be creative!</p>	
<p><b>Pockets</b> – They come in lots of shapes, such as patch pockets, paper bag pockets, etc.</p>	
<p><b>Layered buttons</b> – You can get some big buttons. By layering buttons of varying sizes together, you can make a unique feature. Buttons on a ribbon are always a winner.</p>	

## Other ideas

- Using a **soft backing fabric** like jersey makes the blanket luxurious when placed on a patient's lap.
- **Wadding** makes the blanket extra soft.
- A cotton topper with **extra-special additions** like ribbons, large buttons and pockets make a perfect gift.

**Thank you for your support!**