



Dementia

Dementia is a loss of brain function that occurs with certain diseases. It affects memory, thinking, language, judgment, and behavior. With dementia, the loss of mental functions is severe enough to affect normal activities and relationships. Dementia is not a normal part of the aging process, although it is very common in very elderly individuals.

What are Some Types of Dementia?

Dementia has many causes. Some dementias, such as Alzheimer's disease, occur on their own and not as a result of another disease. Some dementias, such as those caused by a reaction to medications or an infection, are reversible with treatment.

Types of Progressive Dementias (those that worsen over time):

- **Alzheimer's disease.** Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia in people age 65 and older. Symptoms usually appear after age 60, but early-onset forms of the disease can occur, usually as the result of a defective gene. Alzheimer's disease usually progresses slowly, over 7 to 10 years, causing a gradual decline in cognitive abilities.
- **Lewy body dementia.** Dementia with Lewy bodies affects approximately 20 percent of people with dementia, making it one of the most common types of dementia. The symptoms of this dementia are similar to Alzheimer's disease, but its unique features often include fluctuations between confusion and clear thinking (lucidity), visual hallucinations, and Parkinson's signs such as tremor and rigidity.
- **Vascular dementia.** This is a result of damage to the brain caused by problems with the arteries serving the brain or heart. Symptoms begin suddenly, often after a stroke, and may occur in people with high blood pressure, or who have had previous strokes or heart attacks.

Some medical conditions can lead to dementia, including Huntington's disease, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, and infections that affect the brain such as HIV/AIDS and Lyme disease.

What Are Some Signs and Symptoms of Dementia?

- Memory loss
- Difficulty communicating
- Inability to learn or remember new information
- Difficulty with planning and organizing
- Difficulty with coordination and motor functions
- Personality changes
- Inability to reason
- Inappropriate behavior
- Paranoia
- Agitation
- Hallucinations

"Adding Years to life,
and life to years."

Is Dementia Ever Reversible?

Some medical conditions can cause symptoms of dementia and are treatable (which can reverse the symptoms of dementia) so it's important that a doctor determine the underlying cause. Some of these conditions include:

- Reactions to medications
- Metabolic problems and endocrine abnormalities
- Nutritional deficiencies
- Infections
- Poisoning
- Brain Tumors

Can Dementia be Prevented?

Although there is no sure way to prevent dementia, there are steps you can take that might help, including:

- Keep your mind active
- Be physically and socially active
- Lower your homocysteine levels with high doses of B vitamins
- Lower your cholesterol levels
- Control diabetes
- Quit smoking
- Lower your blood pressure
- Pursue education
- Maintain a healthy diet
- Get your vaccinations

How Can I Live Better with Dementia?

The following steps may help you improve your quality of life as the disease progresses:

- Carry a reminder calendar
- Maintain a calm and stable home environment
- Establish a nighttime ritual
- Create a plan that identifies goals for care

How Our Home Care Team Can Help

Our services may include but are not limited to:

- Patient supervision to prevent wandering
- Medication reminders to prevent over (or under) utilization of prescribed medication
- Toileting reminders to eliminate potential accidents
- Incontinence care to prevent skin problems and urinary tract infection
- Meal preparation to maintain nutrition and
- prevent kitchen accidents
- Transportation to errands and medical appointments
- Social stimulation to combat loneliness / depression
- Respite for family members
- And many more!