

Dementia Overview

What is Dementia?

Dementia describes a collection of symptoms that are caused by disorders which affect the brain. Dementia is not a disease in itself, but could be thought of like the categorical term "cancer". Just like you may ask someone what kind of cancer they may have, you may ask what type of dementia someone may have.

There is somewhere around 110 different dementias. Alzheimer's disease is thought to be one of the most common form of dementia.

Most Common Types of Dementia

- Alzheimers Disease
- Vascular Dementia
- Lewy Body Dementia
- Frontal Temporal Dementia
- Young Onset Dementia
- Mixed Dementia

Is there a Cure for Dementia?

With many types of dementia, some brain cells stop functioning, lose connections, and die, leading to "brain failure." This means the person can no longer think or process information as they once did. Dementia is usually progressive, spreading through the brain over time and causing symptoms to worsen over time.

Resources:

<https://alzheimer.ca/sites/default/files/documents/What-is-dementia-Alzheimer-Society-2024.pdf>

Who Gets Dementia?

- Dementia can happen to anyone, but risk increases with
- age.
- It is not a normal part of ageing – it is caused by brain disease.
- Rare inherited forms exist, but most cases are not genetic.
- A family history of dementia may increase risk.
- Health and lifestyle factors also play a role.

Risk factors include:

- Smoking & drinking
- Depression
- Obesity & diabetes
- Thyroid disease
- Heart disease & atrial fibrillation
- Lack of exercise
- Poor social health
- Head injury



How do you Diagnose Dementia?

Dementia is diagnosed when two or more cognitive functions are significantly impaired. These can include:

- Memory
- Language skills
- Understanding information
- Spatial awareness
- Judgement
- Attention

Common signs of dementia:

- Difficulty solving problems
- Trouble controlling emotions
- Personality changes

Symptoms vary depending on which parts of the brain are affected. Memory may not be affected at first, but usually becomes impaired over time.