

TREATMENT OF DEMENTIA

Two primary treatments are used to alleviate symptoms of dementia: medications and non-drug therapies. Not all medications are approved for each type of dementia, and no treatment is a cure.

Medications for dementia – Medications are used to treat symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and other dementia-causing conditions. These drugs may help to form memories, improve judgment and delay the onset of cognitive and behavioural symptoms. Medication may help people to maintain their usual mental functions for a longer period of time.

Non-drug therapies – These therapies may help reduce symptoms of dementia and alleviate some of the manageable complications of the condition. Common non-drug treatments for dementia include:

- **Modifying your environment.** Clutter, noise, and overstimulation may reduce focus.
- **Modifying common tasks.** You can work with a therapist or other healthcare professional to break down everyday activities, such as showering or grooming, into manageable tasks.
- **Occupational therapy.** Occupational therapists are specialised healthcare professionals who can help you learn to be safer and more secure with tasks including walking, cooking, and driving.

DEMENTIA PREVENTION

For decades, doctors and researchers believed dementia could not be prevented or cured. However, new research suggests that may not be the case. A recent review found that more than one-third of dementia cases may be the result of lifestyle factors. Specifically, the researchers identified nine risk factors that may increase a person's chance of developing dementia. They include:

- Midlife hypertension
- Midlife obesity
- Hearing loss
- Late-life depression
- Diabetes
- Physical inactivity
- Smoking
- Social isolation
- Lower levels of education

The researchers believe that targeting these risk factors with treatment or intervention could delay or possibly prevent some cases of dementia. The study suggested that lifestyle factors such as smoking status, physical activity, diet, and alcohol consumption could potentially contribute to the risk of dementia.

It's absolutely natural to forget things once in a while. Memory loss by itself does not mean you have dementia. There is a difference between occasional forgetfulness and forgetfulness that is cause for serious concern. Potential red flags for dementia include:

- Forgetting who someone is.
- Forgetting how to do common tasks, such as how to use the telephone or find your way home.
- Inability to comprehend or retain information that has been clearly provided.

Get medical attention if you experience any of the above.

SUMMARY

Currently, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that Alzheimer's disease is the seventh most common cause of death. That said, people with dementia will progress through the illness at varying speeds and experience different symptoms. There is currently no cure for dementia, but plenty of research is still being done. Hopefully, one day, outlooks will improve. If you're experiencing memory issues or any other symptoms that point to dementia, talk with your doctor as soon as possible. Early diagnosis can help people with dementia and their families plan for the future.



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01865 770 380



manager@minihealthhub.co.uk



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PREHABILITATION HEALTH CONDITIONS DEMENTIA

Dementia is a decline in cognitive function. To be considered dementia, mental impairment must affect at least two brain functions. Dementia may affect:

- Memory / Thinking / Language / Judgment / Behaviour.

Dementia may be caused by a variety of illnesses or injuries. Mental impairment may range from mild to severe. It may also cause personality changes. Some types of dementia are progressive. This means they get worse over time. Some types are treatable or even reversible. Some experts restrict the term "dementia" to irreversible mental deterioration.

WHAT CAUSES DEMENTIA

Dementia has many causes. In general, it results from the degeneration of neurons (brain cells) or disturbances in other body systems that affect how neurons function. Several conditions can cause dementia, including diseases of the brain. The most common causes are Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia. Some of the more common causes of dementia include:

Neurodegenerative diseases - "Neurodegenerative" means that neurons gradually stop functioning or function inappropriately and eventually die. This affects the neuron-to-neuron connections, called synapses, which are how messages are passed along in your brain. This disconnect can result in a range of dysfunction:

- Alzheimer's disease
- Parkinson's disease with dementia
- Vascular dementia
- Chronic alcohol use disorder.

Another cause is frontotemporal lobar degeneration. This is a blanket term for a range of conditions that cause damage to the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain. They include:

- Frontotemporal dementia
- Pick's disease
- Supranuclear palsy
- Corticobasal degeneration.

Other causes of dementia - Dementia has other causes, including:

- Structural brain disorders, such as normal pressure hydrocephalus and subdural hematoma.
- Metabolic disorders, such as hypothyroidism, vitamin B12 deficiency, and kidney and liver disorders.
- Toxins, such as lead.
- Certain tumours or infections of the brain.
- Medication side effects.

Some of these types of dementia may be reversible. These treatable causes of dementia may reverse symptoms if they're caught early enough. This is one of the many reasons why it's important to contact your doctor and get a medical workup as soon as symptoms develop.



DEMENTIA SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

In its early stages, dementia can cause symptoms, such as:

- Not coping well with change. Someone may have a hard time accepting changes in schedules or environment.
- Subtle changes in short-term memory making. Someone can remember the events of 15 years ago like it was yesterday, but they can't remember what they had for lunch.
- Reaching for the right words. Word recollection or association may be more difficult.
- Being repetitive. Someone may ask the same question, complete the same task, or tell the same story multiple times.
- Confused sense of direction. Places someone once knew well may now feel foreign. They may also struggle with driving routes they've taken for years because it no longer looks familiar.
- Struggling to follow storylines. Someone may find following a person's story or description difficult.
- Changes in mood. Depression, frustration, and anger are not uncommon for people with dementia.
- Loss of interest. Apathy may occur in people with dementia. This includes losing interest in hobbies or activities that they once enjoyed.
- Confusion. People, places, and events may no longer feel familiar. Someone might not remember people who know them.
- Difficulty completing everyday tasks. A person in the early stages of dementia may have trouble recalling how to do tasks they've done for many years.

COMMON TYPES OF DEMENTIA

Different diseases cause different types of dementia. The most common types of dementia include:

- **Alzheimer's disease.** The most common type of dementia, Alzheimer's disease makes up 60 to 80 percent of dementia cases, according to the Alzheimer's Association.
- **Vascular dementia.** This type of dementia is caused by reduced blood flow in the brain. It may be the result of plaque build-up in arteries that feed blood to the brain or a stroke.
- **Lewy body dementia.** With Lewy body dementia, protein deposits in nerve cells prevent the brain from sending chemical signals. This results in lost messages, delayed reactions, and memory loss.
- **Parkinson's disease.** Individuals with advanced Parkinson's disease may develop dementia. Symptoms of this particular type of dementia include problems with reasoning and judgment, as well as increased irritability, paranoia, and depression.
- **Frontotemporal dementia.** Several types of dementia fall into this category. They're each affected by changes in the front and side parts of the brain. Symptoms include difficulty with language and behaviour, as well as loss of inhibitions.

STAGES OF DEMENTIA

In most cases, dementia is progressive, getting worse over time. That said, dementia progresses differently in everyone. However, most people experience symptoms of the following stages of dementia.

Mild cognitive impairment

Older adults may develop mild cognitive impairment (MCI) but may never progress to dementia or any other mental impairment. People with MCI commonly experience forgetfulness, trouble recalling words, and short-term memory problems.

Mild dementia

At this stage, people with mild dementia may be able to function independently. Symptoms include:

- Short-term memory lapses.
- Personality changes, including anger or depression.
- Misplacing things or forgetfulness.
- Difficulty with complex tasks or problem solving.
- Difficulty expressing emotions or ideas.

Moderate dementia

At this stage of dementia, people affected may need assistance from a loved one or care professional. That's because dementia may now interfere with daily tasks and activities. Symptoms include:

- Poor judgment.
- Increasing confusion and frustration.
- Memory loss that reaches further into the past.
- Needing help with tasks like dressing and bathing.
- Significant personality changes.

Severe dementia

At this late stage of dementia, the mental and physical symptoms of the condition continue to worsen. Symptoms include:

- Inability to maintain bodily functions, including walking and eventually swallowing and controlling the bladder.
- Inability to communicate.
- Requiring full-time assistance.
- Increased risk of infections.

People with dementia will progress through the stages of dementia at different rates.

ALCOHOL AND DEMENTIA

Alcohol use may be the most preventable risk factor for dementia. A recent study found that the majority of early onset dementia cases were related to alcohol use. The study found that nearly one-third of early onset dementia cases were directly linked to alcohol. Alcohol use disorders, the researchers discovered, increase a person's risk of dementia threefold. Not all drinking is dangerous to your memories and mental health. Moderate levels of drinking may even be beneficial to your heart's health. This includes no more than two units per day for women and three units per day for men.