

Dementia

Dementia is an overall term for diseases and conditions characterized by a decline in memory, language, problem-solving and other cognitive skills that affect a person's ability to perform everyday activities. This decline occurs because nerve cells (neurons) in parts of the brain involved in cognitive function have been damaged and no longer function normally. **Alzheimer's** is the most common cause of dementia, accounting for 60% to 80% of cases. **Vascular dementia**, which occurs because of microscopic bleeding and blood vessel blockage in the brain, is the second most common cause of dementia.

Other types and causes of dementia:

- Mixed dementia
- Frontotemporal dementia
- Dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB)
- Parkinson's disease
- Normal pressure hydrocephalus
- Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease
- Pick's disease
- Progressive supranuclear palsy

Individuals with Down syndrome, Huntington's disease and Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome are at risk for developing dementia symptoms.

Symptoms of dementia can vary greatly. Examples include problems with short-term memory, keeping track of a purse or wallet, paying bills, planning and preparing meals, remembering appointments and traveling out of the neighborhood.

In some cases, individuals do not have dementia but instead have a condition with symptoms that mimic those of dementia. Common causes of dementia-like symptoms are depression, delirium, side effects from medications, thyroid problems, certain vitamin deficiencies and excessive use of alcohol. Unlike dementia, these conditions may often be reversed with treatment.

New research reported at the 2019 Alzheimer's Association International Conference® suggests that adopting multiple healthy lifestyle choices, including healthy diet, not smoking, regular exercise and cognitive stimulation, may decrease the risk of cognitive decline and dementia.

A physician can help identify the specific cause of dementia and provide appropriate care.

TS-0052 | Updated August 2019