

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT DEMENTIA

In the Clinic
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What is dementia?

Dementia is a group of symptoms related to impaired memory and thinking skills. People with dementia begin to forget things and can have problems with everyday tasks. There are different types of dementia. Dementia symptoms usually start slowly and get worse over time.

What are the symptoms?

- Forgetting things more and more often
- Trouble with familiar activities, like making a meal or a phone call
- Having trouble finding the right words
- Poor judgment, such as leaving the house with no coat in the winter
- Misplacing things or putting things in unusual places, such as keys in the refrigerator
- Personality changes, such as becoming very confused, suspicious, fearful, or dependent
- Unable to follow instructions, such as taking medications
- Unexplained weight loss
- New onset of depression or anxiety

How is it diagnosed?

There is no one specific test for dementia. If a doctor thinks a patient may have dementia, they will review symptoms and ask about medical history. Some other tests a doctor may perform are:

- Memory test—to check memory and concentration
- Neurologic examination—to check for problems that may indicate a brain disorder. A doctor will test things like speech, reflexes, and coordination.
- Brain scans—like MRI or CT scans.
- Laboratory blood tests—which can rule out problems that may cause symptoms similar to dementia.



How is it treated?

There are treatments that may help to manage different symptoms of dementia. These may help people with dementia think better and slow down the worsening of symptoms. Behavior changes can be treated in ways that promote comfort for the patient. For example, creating a calm environment and making sure people with dementia have enough rest can help to manage behavior symptoms. Medicines also may help these and other symptoms. Talk with a doctor for the best treatment options.

For More Information

www.acponline.org/patients_families/products/health_tips/dem_en.pdf
American College of Physicians

www.alz.org/what-is-dementia.asp
Alzheimer's Association

<https://caregiver.org/node/92>
Family Caregiver Alliance

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/dementia.html
Medline Plus

