

## 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 type of dementia, accounting for 60 to 80 percent of cases. **Vascular dementia**, which occurs because of microscopic bleeding and blood vessel blockage in the brain, is the second most common type of dementia.

Other types and causes of dementia:

- Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease
- Mixed dementia
- Frontotemporal dementia
- Lewy body dementia/Dementia with Lewy bodies
- Normal-pressure hydrocephalus
- Parkinson's 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.

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

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