

UNDERSTANDING DEMENTIA

Dementia is a broad category of diseases and conditions that result in a decreased ability to think, reason, and remember things. Dementia affect how a person is able to function on a daily basis. Individuals with dementia may also lose the ability to carry out normal, daily activities such as driving, getting dressed, and eating. The symptoms, treatment, and diagnosis of dementia vary depending on which part of the brain is affected (Alzheimer's Association, 2014).

Causes (Alzheimer's Association, 2014)

Dementia cannot occur as a disease on its own. Triggers such as inflammation, injury, certain diseases, and infection can damage the connections of nerve cells in the brain, leading to dementia. Some causes of dementia include:

- ♦ Conditions where brain cells are attacked or destroyed
 - Alzheimer's disease
 - Huntington's disease
 - Parkinson's disease
- ♦ Strokes
- ♦ Conditions that block oxygen delivery to the brain
 - Brain aneurysm
 - Brain tumor
- ♦ Substance abuse
- ♦ Trauma to the brain
- ♦ Infection in the brain or spinal cord

Symptoms (Mayo Clinic, 2014)

Dementia includes a group of symptoms that cause the brain to not function as well as it should. The following are common symptoms seen with dementia:

- ♦ Memory loss
- ♦ Impaired speaking
- ♦ Impaired judgment
- ♦ Loss of communication ability

- ♦ Hallucinations
- ♦ Paranoia
- ♦ Agitation
- ♦ Disorientation
- ♦ Wandering
- ♦ Inappropriate, abnormal behavior

Diagnosis & Tests (Mayo Clinic, 2014)

Dementia can be tested using thorough neurological exams, blood tests, CT scans or MRIs along with a standard physical examination. It is important that your physician rule out other conditions while testing you for dementia.

Treatment & Care (Alzheimer's Association, 2014)

Though there is no cure for dementia, there are certain measures that can be taken to control the symptoms and keep life as normal as possible. The main goal in treatment is to isolate and treat the underlying cause of dementia. Some treatment methods include:

- ♦ Medications for the underlying condition, as well as medications to help with dementia symptoms
- ♦ Mental and physical exercise
- ♦ Smoking cessation
- ♦ Maintaining a healthy diet



Regardless of what treatment method you and your physician choose, it is essential that you follow your care plan exactly. The more precise you are with your treatment, the better your results can be.

It is crucial that individuals with dementia are cared for and supervised. If you notice that you, or somebody around you is experiencing any symptoms of dementia, contact your healthcare provider to be examined.

Prevention (Mayo Clinic, 2014)

There is no definitive way to prevent dementia, but many factors can lead to dementia; it is important

to stay healthy, active and to quit smoking. Staying in good mental and physical shape will help you reduce your risk of acquiring dementia.

Disclaimer:

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REFERENCES

1. Alzheimer's Association (2014). What Is Dementia? Retrieved July 15, 2015, from <http://www.alz.org/what-is-dementia.asp>
2. Mayo Clinic (2014). Dementia. Retrieved July 15, 2015, from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dementia/basics/definition/con-20034399>