

Dementia



SUPPORTING A
CIRCLE OF CARE
SOUTENIR UN
CERCLE DE SOINS

What is Dementia?

Dementia is an umbrella term that describes the loss of mental function affecting daily activities. It is **not a normal part of aging** and is caused by brain diseases and brain injuries. Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia (1).

What is normal when we age?

Some memory changes are normal as we age. In fact, 40% of people over the age of 65 will have some form of memory loss (2). As long as memory impairment does not disrupt daily life, affect one's ability to complete tasks or interfere with learning or remembering new things, it is likely that this is age-related memory impairment and unlikely to be dementia (2).

Indigenous views on Dementia

While there are words in various Indigenous languages that describe symptoms associated with memory loss, a word for dementia does not exist (3). Some Indigenous communities attribute symptoms of dementia to an imbalance that is caused by colonization (4). Others perceive hallucinations as a normal part of growing older and a sign of a closeness to the spirit world (5).

What causes Dementia?

Although it can occur before the age of 65, dementia mostly affects adults aged 65 and over. Dementia is caused by damaged or loss of nerve cells in the brain that prevent messaging between brain cells (6). As a result, this damage can cause memory loss, changes in mood, behaviour, and/or personality (6). Some types of dementia have specific causes. For example, vascular dementia is caused by damage to brain cells due to disrupted blood flow to the brain following a stroke (7). Alcohol induced dementia on the other hand, is caused by brain damage following excessive consumption of alcohol over a long period of time.

What are the symptoms of Dementia (1):

1. **Memory loss**
2. **Behavioural, mood, personality, and communication changes**
3. **Problems with judgement and reasoning**

Risk Factors:

Some conditions or circumstances can increase your risk of developing dementia, these are called risk factors. **Modifiable risk factors** are those that you can control or take measures to change. **Non-modifiable risk factors** on the other hand, cannot be changed or controlled.



Risk factors for dementia include:

Modifiable Risk Factors	Non-modifiable Risk Factors
Midlife obesity	Age
Physical inactivity	Gender
Smoking	Genetics (hereditary)
Excessive alcohol consumption	Trisomy 21 (Down Syndrome)
Diabetes	Medical conditions including Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, chronic kidney disease and HIV
Cognitive inactivity or low educational attainment	
Hypertension	
Cardiovascular disease including stroke	
Trauma to the head (concussion)	
Depression	

Reduce your risk of developing dementia (8):



Engage in physical activity



Healthy eating



Stop smoking and decrease consumption of alcohol



Keep mentally active, challenge yourself and try to make it fun



Maintain social and cultural connections with family, friends, neighbors and community

References

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