

What is dementia?

We all forget things, experience changes in our mood, or mix-up our words from time-to-time. But when this begins to affect our day-to-day functioning, it could be a sign of a condition called dementia.

What is dementia?

Dementia is a broad term that describes a set of symptoms that may include memory loss, changes in mood, and difficulties with thinking, problem solving and language. While they may seem small at the start, they can affect the day-to-day lives of people with dementia.

Dementia is caused when the brain is damaged by diseases or a series of strokes. There are many diseases which can cause dementia, with Alzheimer's being the most common. Regardless of the cause, dementia can be frightening, which makes it difficult to find the right help.

But there is help.

Learning how to live well with dementia, and how to manage the symptoms, can help you gain control and confidence along your journey. The Alzheimer Society is here to provide you with the support and information to do just that, no matter where you are on this journey.

People may think dementia is a normal part of aging. It is not.

There are important differences between symptoms of dementia and normal aspects of aging:

Normal Aging	Dementia
Forgetting events from a year ago.	Forgetting details from recent events.
Becoming lost occasionally.	Becoming lost frequently or in familiar places.
Occasionally struggling to find words.	Frequently pausing and using substitutions when trying to find words.
Able to speak clearly and well.	Increase in slurred speech and other language problems.
Predictable and stable moods.	Unpredictable changes in mood and behaviour.
Able to follow and participate in conversations.	Difficulty in following or participating in conversations; frequent repetition of questions and stories.
Ability to perform everyday tasks like paying bills and shopping.	Difficulty with remembering to do everyday tasks, like paying bills or shopping.

An early diagnosis can help slow the progression of the disease.

A dementia diagnosis does not mean your life as you know it has stopped. Research shows an early diagnosis with proper intervention can help slow down the progression of dementia. This can help people continue to have full lives for a long time after diagnosis. While the symptoms will get worse over time, there are treatment options and therapies available. Making lifestyle changes that encourage brain health can also help delay the onset of dementia and slow its progression. These include:

 <p>Exercising your brain with new cognitive exercises, like learning a new language or instrument.</p>	 <p>Protecting your head from injury.</p>
 <p>Staying socially connected with friends, family and neighbours.</p>	 <p>Being physically active.</p>
 <p>Eating a healthy diet by including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts in your meals.</p>	 <p>Taking care of your hearing by getting annual evaluations and wearing a hearing aid, if needed.</p>
 <p>Visiting your doctor or other healthcare providers regularly.</p>	 <p>Quitting smoking and reducing alcohol intake.</p>

The Alzheimer Society can help.

If you are concerned that you or someone you care about has dementia see your doctor and contact the Alzheimer Society today. The Alzheimer Society is active in communities across the country. Find your local office on our website: www.alzheimer.ca/find.

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