

Soci t  Alzheimer Society

Detecting dementia during the holidays: Signs of Alzheimer’s disease or other dementias to look for

The holiday season is a time for celebration and family gatherings. It’s also a time when you may notice changes in an aging friend or family member, especially if you haven’t seen them in a while.

Often the symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease or other dementias are present long before diagnosis. These signs can be disguised during day-to-day routine but can surface as a result of the hectic pace of the holidays or the stress of change in schedule.



When visiting with family this season, look for these telltale signs:

- Does she struggle to think of the right words or even remember your name?
- Has she forgotten to buy gifts...or bought gifts that are out of character? Does she seem surprised by the gifts she bought for others?
- Is his clothing clean and in good repair?
- Does she look thinner?
- Does he have difficulty following the conversation?
- Does she forget basic etiquette?
- Is he unusually quiet or does he appear sad or depressed?
- Is she easily distracted, agitated or overwhelmed?

Also, look around the home.

- Is the house unusually cluttered with piles of newspapers, plastic bags or unopened mail? Are the lights working? Is the heat on?
- Is there enough food in the house? Or is food spoiling in the refrigerator?
- Are pots and pans scorched on the bottom?
- Do medications seem to be used appropriately?

Take note of these other warning signs:

- memory loss beyond forgetting occasional names and appointments
- performing familiar tasks with difficulty
- disorientation with time and place
- poor judgement
- difficulty with abstract thinking
- misplacing familiar objects

There’s no easy way of addressing your concerns with a family member you suspect may have dementia. But it’s important they see a family doctor to rule out treatable physical conditions that can cause dementia.

Early diagnosis is important to managing the disease effectively through education, support and treatment. Detecting the disease in the early stages also helps individuals and families better plan for the future and maintain quality of life.

**For practical advice and support this holiday season, contact your local Alzheimer Society.
For crisis situations at night or on the weekend, call Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000).**