



Memory Loss, Dementia, and Alzheimer's: The Basics

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Typical changes

Typical age-related changes involve:

- Making a bad decision once in a while
- Missing an occasional monthly payment
- Forgetting which day it is and remembering later
- Sometimes forgetting which word to use
- Losing things from time to time

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Problematic changes

Changes indicating the need for a physician visit:

- Consistent poor judgment and decision making
- Loss of an ability to manage money
- Inability to keep track of the date or the season
- Difficulty having a conversation
- Misplacing things and loss of the ability to retrace steps to find them
- Trouble with visual and spatial relationships
- Challenges in planning or solving problems

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Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)

- An individual's report of his/her cognitive problems
- Measurable
- Normal overall thinking and reasoning skills
- Ability to perform normal daily activities

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Dementia

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV)

Criteria for dementia, the following are required:

Symptoms must include decline in memory and decline in at least one of the following cognitive abilities:

- To generate coherent speech, understand spoken, or written language
- To recognize or identify objects

Dementia

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV)

- To execute motor activities
- To think abstractly, make sound judgments, and plan and carry-out complex tasks.

The decline in cognitive ability must be severe enough to interfere with daily life.

Alzheimer's disease

- Progressive, degenerative, neurological disease of the brain
- A steady decline in memory and intellectual functioning severe enough to interfere with everyday life
- It is not reversible
- It is fatal

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Related Dementias

Neurodegenerative disorders

- Lewy Body Dementia
- Frontotemporal dementia

Vascular Cognitive Impairment

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Dementia with Lewy bodies

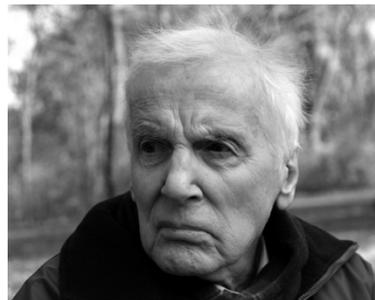


- Wide variations in attention and alertness
- May include:
 - ◆ Hallucinations
 - ◆ Tremors
 - ◆ Rigidity

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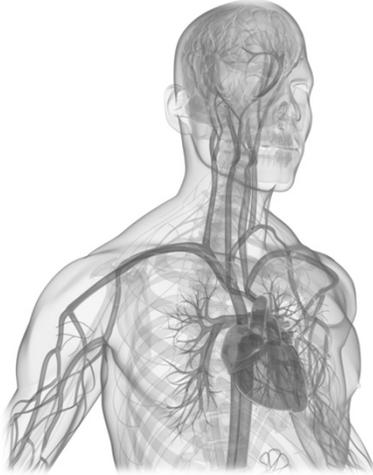
Frontotemporal dementia

- Judgment, executive function, impulse control
- Language processing and expression
- Begins earlier and progresses more quickly than Alzheimer's disease



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Vascular dementia



- Second most common form of dementia
- Caused by damage as result of reduced blood flow from one or more strokes

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Major risk factors

- Age
- Gender
- Family history
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- MCI
- Stroke
- Down syndrome

Estimated Percentage of Americans Aged 71+ with Dementia by Gender, ADAM 



Created from data from Plassman et al.²

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Risk factors for African Americans

- African Americans are twice as likely as whites to have Alzheimer's disease due to higher rates of:
 - ◆ Diabetes
 - ◆ Blood pressure problems
 - ◆ High cholesterol

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Early Stage

- Forgetfulness
- Writes reminders, but loses them
- Personality changes
- Shows up at the wrong time or day
- Changes in appearance
- Functional changes
- Preference for familiar things

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Middle Stage

- Behavioral changes more noticeable 
- May be confused about place
- May exit safe environment
- Changes in appetite
- Recognition of self and others begins to decline

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Late Stage

- Severe disorientation to time and place 
- Loss of speech
- Difficulty walking
- Incontinent
- No longer recognizes family members
- Need total care for survival

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Medications

FDA-approved cholinesterase inhibitors to treat mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease 

- Donepezil (Aricept), approved 1996
- Rivastigmine (Exelon), approved 2000
- Galantamine (Razadyne), approved 2005

Medications

FDA-approved cholinesterase inhibitors to treat severe Alzheimer's disease 

- Donepezil (Aricept), approved 2006

FDA-approved glutamate receptor antagonist to treat moderate to severe Alzheimer's disease

- Memantine (Namenda), approved 2003

Impact of Dementia on Cognition

- Memory
- Judgment
- Attention
- Perception
- Reasoning
- Organization
- Abstraction
- Language



Benefits of Early Diagnosis

- Understand and manage changes
- Make decisions—legal, financial, life planning
- Build a support team/system
- Live life dreams



Screening MeasuresB

Mini-Cog

www.nursingcenter.com



SLUMS

www.aging.slu.edu

Family Questionnaire

www.alz.org

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Programs and services

- 24/7 Information Helpline 1.800.272.3900
- Website
www.alz.org/mnnd
- Care Consultation
- Support Groups
- Medic Alert + Safe Return
- Education



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Resources

www.lewybodydementia.org



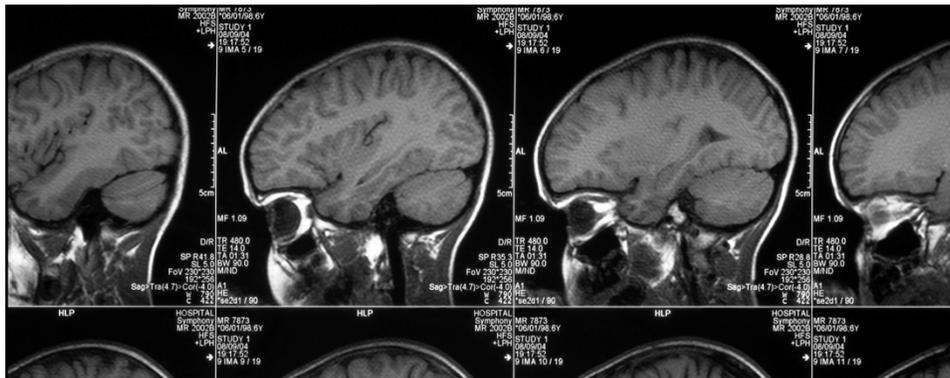
www.theaftd.org

Mayo Clinic Guide to Alzheimer's Disease, Ronald Petersen, MD, PhD
Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 2006

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
www.ninds.nih.gov

www.alz.org/mnnd

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