

UNDERSTANDING ALZHEIMER'S AND DEMENTIA

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

PHASES OF DEMENTIA

Persons with dementia experience various degrees of dementia. Typically symptoms of dementia progress through phases in which the symptoms grow in intensity and severity. It is not always easy to determine which phase someone is in. Page 3 of this resource guide provide some indicators to be looking for in your loved one.

An estimated 5.2 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease in 2014, including approximately 200,000 individuals younger than age 65 who have younger-onset Alzheimer's.

Almost two-thirds of American seniors living with Alzheimer's are women. Of the 5 million people age 65 and older with Alzheimer's in the United States, 3.2 million are women and 1.8 million are men.

The number of Americans with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias will escalate rapidly in coming years as the baby boom generation ages. **By 2050, the number of people age 65 and older with Alzheimer's disease may nearly triple**, from 5 million to as many as 16 million, barring the development of medical breakthroughs to prevent, slow or stop the disease.

“Alzheimer’s disease is the 6th leading cause of death in the United States.”

Alzheimer’s Association Facts & Data 2014



TYPES OF DEMENTIA

Many families today find themselves dealing with a loved one with dementia. Alzheimer's is one of the most common forms of dementia, and people often use the terms interchangeably. There are several types of dementia, each with its own set of causes and symptoms. The chart below outlines several forms of dementia, their symptoms, and links to additional information.

Dementia	Distinguishing Symptoms	Resources
AIDS Related Dementia	Loss of appetite Inappropriate emotional responses Unsteadiness	www.thebody.com and search by dementia
Alzheimer's	Collecting behavior Repetition Exploring/wandering	www.alzheimers.org.uk www.nia.nih.gov and click on Alzheimer's Disease www.alz.org
Creutzfeldt-Jakob	Minor lapses in memory Mood changes Jerky movements	www.cjdfoundation.org www.mayoclinic.com and search by Creutzfeldt-Jakob
Down's Syndrome	Decline in physical/mental abilities Difficulties communicating Confusion	www.dsscotland.org.uk and search by dementia
Huntington's	Jaw clenching Slurred speech Swallowing and/or eating difficulty Walking difficulty (stumbling/falling) Uncontrolled muscle contractions	www.mayoclinic.com and search by Huntington's disease www.hdac.org www.about-dementia.com and click on Huntington's
Korsakoff's Syndrome	Involuntary jerky eye movement Drowsiness Invent information to fill in gaps in memory	www.alzheimers.org.uk and click on Factsheets, then Korsakoff's Syndrome
Lewy Body Dementia	Nightmares Abilities fluctuate daily, even hourly Fainting/falls Visual hallucinations	www.helpguide.org and search by Lewy Body www.lewybodydementia.org www.alzheimer.ca/english and click on Alzheimer's Disease, then Related Dementias
Parkinson's	Gait – shuffling, head down Tremors Excessive sweating Muscle stiffness/rigidity Lack of motivation Moodiness Slowed thinking	www.helpguide.org and search by Parkinson's dementia www.about-dementia.com and click on Parkinson's
Pick's	Repetitive behavior Develop taste for sweet foods Overeat or try to eat one type of food Lack of compassion or concern Changes in sexual behavior	www.helpguide.org and search by Pick's
Traumatic Brain Injury	Difficulty with hand/eye coordination Behavioral changes Emotional problems, irritability and outbursts	www.ninds.nih.gov and click on disorders, then Traumatic Brain Injury
Vascular	Dizziness Weakness in arms or legs Symptoms present in a stepwise fashion Restlessness Periods of acute confusion followed by periods of stability	www.alzheimers.org.uk and click on Factsheets, then Vascular dementia www.helpguide.org and search by Vascular Dementia

PHASES OF DEMENTIA

Persons with dementia experience various degrees of symptoms. Following are indicators of the three phases:

1. Early Phase of Dementia

Memory

- May experience mild loss of recent memory.

Comprehension

- May have difficulty understanding complex conversations, talking that is too fast, and talking that takes place in noisy or distracting environments.
- Understands facial expressions, gestures, and other non-verbal cues, but may be unable to understand humor and sarcasm.
- Can follow directions if the directions are clearly stated.
- Can understand written notes that remind or cue the person to do something. For example, "Take your heart medication at 2 pm."

Language Skills

- May have some problems thinking what to say.
- May have difficulties with words and use related words, such as "sugar" for "salt."
- Will often correct mistakes themselves.
- Will continue to use good grammar if they have previously done so.

Social communication

- Changes the subject to hide that they are having difficulties.
- Tend to repeat themselves.
- Rely heavily on clichés.
- Manage to get along in most social situations.

2. Middle Phase of Dementia

Memory

- May experience moderate loss of long and short-term memory.
- Cannot remember less common words or concepts and less familiar names.
- Will no longer be able to hide memory problems.
- Learning new material becomes very difficult.

Comprehension

- Will have trouble understanding day-to-day conversations.
- Will be unable to understand when people talk fast.
- Will have difficulty focusing and paying attention.
- Are easily distracted by noise and other people talking.
- May require repetition of simple directions.
- Can read but may or may not understand the meaning.
- Miss facial expressions but are still aware of their emotional meaning.

Language skills

- Lose the ability to remember names and words.
- Ability to process words into ideas is slower.
- Often you slang or "gibberish."
- May endlessly repeat questions, words, or ideas.
- May still use relatively good grammar.
- Have difficulty reading and writing, use fewer words, and spelling errors are common.

Social communication

- Talking becomes unclear, empty, and not related to the conversation.
- May not be interested in starting a conversation.
- Ask fewer questions and seldom comment or correct themselves.
- Answers to questions are often inappropriate. May forget the question that was asked.
- Can still handle some casual social situations.

3. Late Phase of Dementia

Memory

- Does not know the time, place or person.
- Fails to recognize self or family members.
- Cannot form new memories.

Comprehension

- Does not understand the meaning of words.
- May be unaware that someone is speaking to them.

Language skills

- May repeat things over and over or repeat what others say.
- May use poor grammar.
- May speak only in slang or nonsense or not talk at all.
- Revert back to language of origin.

Social communication

- No longer aware of social interactions and what is expected.
- May withdraw partially or completely.

For more information, go to
www.visitingangels.com/northwest.

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assistance and support for you and
your loved one 24/7.

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