



Living with Dementia: Dementia Basics

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Upcoming Classes

- ***Dementia Care and the COVID-19 Pandemic***
Hope Hospice Town Hall Webinar
Wednesday, September 16 • 10:30-11:30 a.m.
- ***Necessary Evils: Legal and Financial Issues*** (webinar)
Speaker: Julie Fiedler, RN, JD, Horizon Elder Law
Thursday, October 15, 2020 • 10:00 a.m. - noon
- ***Dementia GEMS State Model***
Hope Hospice Town Hall Webinar
Wednesday, October 21 • 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Register for webinars at www.HopeHospice.com



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Agenda

- Dementia Facts
- Underlying Causes
- Dementia or Typical Age-related Changes?
- Stages of Dementia
- Brain Abilities/Changes
- Risk Reduction Strategies



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Dementia Defined

Dementia is NOT . . .

- a normal part of the aging process.
- contagious.
- only about a loss of memory.
- always permanent.
- the same as Alzheimer's disease.
- a stand-alone diagnosis.



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Dementia Defined

Dementia IS . . .

A group of **symptoms** involving a decline in:

- cognitive functioning and
- behavioral abilities

. . . that affect one's daily life.



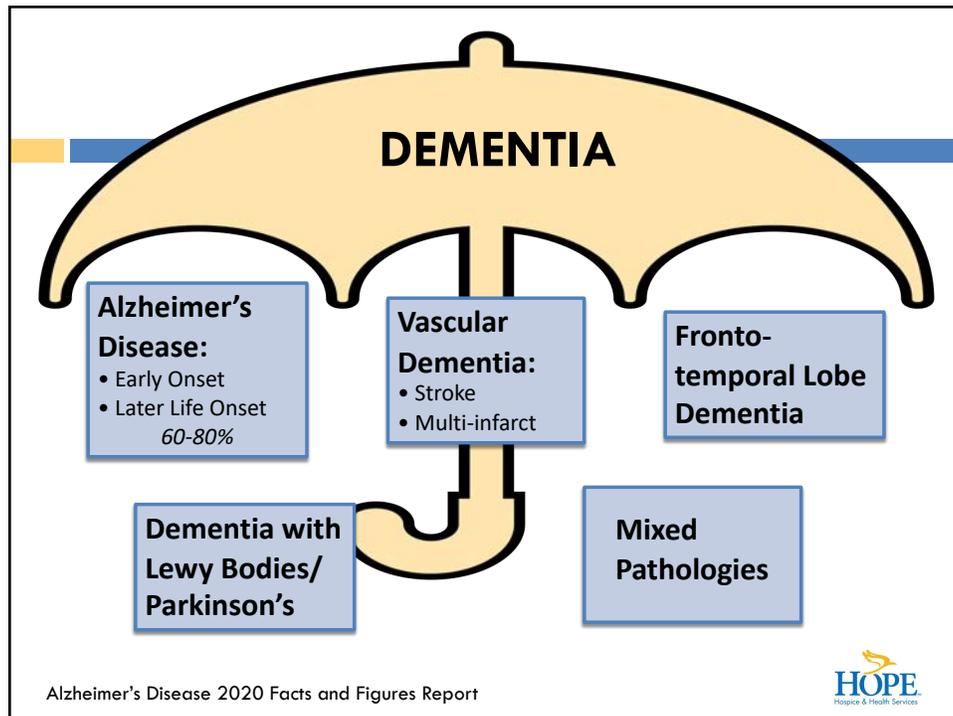
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Reversible Dementia-Like Conditions

- Reactions to medications.
- Metabolic disturbances.
- Emotional distress.
- Infections.
- Nutritional deficiencies.



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What do all dementias have in common?

- Brain cells (neurons) & pathways are destroyed.
- Involve the death of at least two areas in the brain.
- Are progressive – symptoms keep changing and worsening.
- Are chronic – not curable or fixable.
- Are terminal – result in death.

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Typical Age-related Changes

- Making occasional errors when doing finances or paying household bills.
- Getting confused about the day of the week but remembering later.
- Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.
- Occasionally needing help using electronics, like the remote control.
- Misplacing things from time to time and retracing steps to find them.
- Making a mistake or a bad decision occasionally, like forgetting to send a birthday card.
- Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.



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Stages of Dementia

Early-Stage (Mild)

- Usually functions independently.
- Memory lapses; word retrieval issues.
- May have trouble at work or with planning/organizing.
- Symptoms not widely apparent, but family may notice changes.
- Important to get legal and financial matters in place.



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Stages of Dementia

Middle-Stage (Moderate) (longest stage – 8-20 years)

- Greater difficulty communicating verbally.
- Increased forgetfulness and confusion.
- May become easily frustrated or angry.
- May behave in ways that are out of character; loss of social filter.
- Requires more cuing and prompting.
- May get lost or wander.



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Stages of Dementia

Late-Stage (Advanced) (several weeks to several years)

- Loses ability to respond to environment.
- Great difficulty in communicating.
- Primarily communicates through behaviors.
- Changes in physical abilities: walking, sitting, swallowing; fall risk.
- Usually requires 24/7 care.



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Stages of Dementia

End-stage

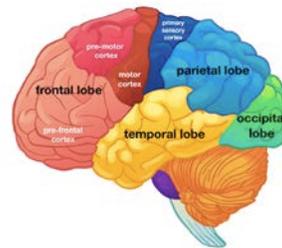
- Chair and/or bed bound.
- Reliance on facial expressions and tone of voice.
- Difficulty with chewing and swallowing.
- Repetitive behaviors.
- Requires 24/7 care.



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Brain Abilities

- Memory
- Language
- Vision
- Perception
- Motor Skills
- Reasoning
- Judgment
- Abstract Thinking
- Attention



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ABILITIES IMPAIRED BY DEMENTIA

MOTOR SKILLS

FINE

- Dexterity, using utensils, writing, dressing.
- Chewing and swallowing

GROSS (LARGE)

- Balance, coordination
- Gait

ABSTRACT THINKING

- Higher level thinking skills.
- Understanding connection between ideas, concepts, etc.
- Concepts of time, money, symbols.
- Understanding sarcasm, figures of speech.

REASONING/JUDGMENT

- Understanding cause & effect.
- Problem-solving.
- Drawing conclusions; decision-making.
- Understanding another's perspective.
- Social filter.
- Impulse control.

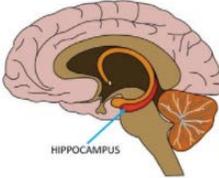
ATTENTION

- Ability to focus.
- Task completion.
- Multi-tasking.
- Awareness of environment.



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Memory Center

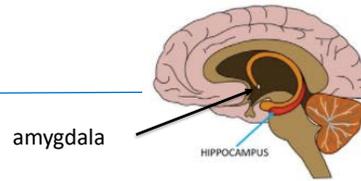


- Hippocampus.
- Tends to be hit first and hardest by dementia.
- Difficulty forming new memories; long-term last to go.
- Factual memories fade, but emotional memories more resistant to deterioration.
- Confabulation.
- Concepts of time, space, directionality impacted.



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Emotional Center

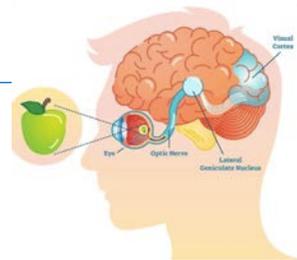


- Emotions remain intact.
- Responds/reacts to emotions of others.
- May not understand or remember your words, but emotions will linger.
- Survival response: fight, flight, or fright.
- Unable to control – emotional center may no longer be “connected” to executive functioning.



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Vision

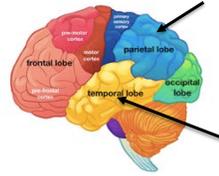


- Retina (eye) and occipital lobes (visual cortex).
- Age-related conditions.
- Change in visual field:
 - Peripheral vision.
 - Depth perception.
 - Motion detection.
- Awareness of environment diminishes.



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Perception



- Interpreting sensations (ex. sight, sound, smell).
- Interpretation involves higher level thinking.
- Distortions:
 - Inability to differentiate between stimuli.
 - May be mistakenly diagnosed as hallucinations or delusions.



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Language Center: **LEFT** Hemisphere



LOST

- Vocabulary, comprehension, speech.
- In early dementia – unable to comprehend approx. 1/4 words.
- Tend to lose nouns first; disorganized.
- May revert to native language.
- Rely more on non-verbal communication.
- Social isolation.



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Language Center: **RIGHT** Hemisphere



RETAINED

- Social chit-chat
- Rhythm
- Music, poetry, prayer
- Forbidden words



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Risk Reduction Strategies

- What’s good for the heart is good for the brain.
 - Eat a balanced diet/maintain healthy weight.
 - Keep blood pressure within normal range.
 - Get regular exercise – at least 150 minutes/week.
 - Do not smoke.
 - Consume alcoholic beverages in moderation.
- Establish healthy sleep habits.
- Manage stress.
- Stay socially connected.
- Engage in intellectual activities: Learn something new; read something that makes you think.



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Resources: www.HopeHospice.com/family-last

The collage displays several educational materials:

- THE DEMENTIAS**: Hope Through Research. Topics include types of dementias, risk factors, diagnosis and treatment, and current research.
- FRONTOTEMPORAL DISORDERS**: Information for Patients, Families, and Caregivers. Topics include types of dementia, genetic predisposition, and treatment.
- LEWY BODY DEMENTIA**: Information for Patients, Families, and Caregivers. Topics include dementia with Lewy bodies and Parkinson's disease dementia.
- KNOW the 10 SIGNS**: EARLY COGNITIVE CHANGES. A poster listing 10 signs of Alzheimer's disease.
- Understanding Memory Loss**: What to do when you have trouble remembering. Includes a photo of an elderly couple.
- Alzheimer's Disease FACT SHEET**: A detailed overview of the disease.
- Alzheimer's Disease Medications FACT SHEET**: Information about various treatments.

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Recommended Reading

*The Dementia Care Partner's Workbook:
A Guide for Understanding, Education, and Hope*

by Edward G. Shaw, M.D., M.A.
(2019)

Available on Amazon.com
(Paperback or Kindle)

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