

4 things you should know about dementia

Find out the four things that you should be aware of when it comes to dementia. It's not a natural part of aging and it's not just about memory loss.

1. Dementia is not a natural part of ageing

We all forget something, especially as we get older, but dementia is something different. Memory problems is one symptom that people with dementia may experience, but also difficulties with planning, struggling to keep up with a conversation, and sometimes changes in mood or behaviour.

Dementia is not a natural part of ageing and it doesn't just affect older people. Over 40,000 people under 65 in the UK have dementia. This is called [early-onset or young-onset dementia](#).

2. Dementia is caused by diseases of the brain

Diseases such as Alzheimer's disease cause nerve cells to die, damaging the structure and chemistry of the brain. There are lots of other causes and no two types of dementia are the same. In different types of dementia there is damage to different parts of the brain.

Other types of dementia include:

- [vascular dementia \(caused by problems with blood supply to the brain\)](#)
- [mixed dementia \(usually Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia\)](#)
- [dementia with Lewy bodies](#)
- [frontotemporal dementia \(including Pick's disease\)](#)

Alzheimer's disease tends to start slowly and progress gradually. Vascular dementia after a stroke often progresses in a 'stepped' way. This means that symptoms are stable for a while and then suddenly get worse.

3. It's not just about losing your memory

When most people hear the word dementia, they think of memory loss. And it does often start by affecting the short-term memory. Someone with dementia might repeat themselves and have problems recalling things that happened recently. But dementia can also affect the way people think, speak, perceive things, feel and behave.

Other common symptoms include:

- difficulties concentrating
- problems planning and thinking things through
- issues with language and communication, for example trouble remembering the right word or keeping up with a conversation
- mood changes and difficulties controlling emotions

Symptoms of dementia gradually get worse over time. How quickly this happens varies from person to person – and some people stay independent for years.

4. People can still live well with dementia

There is no current cure for dementia, but there is support and treatments available that can help with symptoms and managing daily life. These can allow people with dementia to lead active, purposeful lives and carry on doing the things that matter to them most.

Other things that can help with symptoms of dementia include:

- cognitive stimulation, which might involve doing word puzzles or discussing current affairs
- life story work, sharing memories and experiences with a carer or nurse to create a 'life story book'
- keeping as active as possible – physically, mentally and socially – which can boost memory and self esteem, and help avoid depression.