



adasa

Association for Dementia and Alzheimer's of South Africa

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Normal Ageing vs Dementia

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People start to forget things more as they get older; this is usually a typical sign of ageing. With dementia, however, changes will be different, more serious, and will have a greater impact on their lives.

When a person's symptoms notably affect their everyday life and functioning, it is important to reach out to a healthcare professional for a diagnosis. Dementia can only be diagnosed by a qualified and experienced health professional. Do not try to self-diagnose dementia (yourself/somebody else) using this table.

In Normal Memory Loss

- Sometimes forgetting people's names or appointments but remembering later.
- Occasionally forgetting something you were told.
- Misplacing things from time to time, e.g., your glasses, mobile phone, or keys but retracing steps to find them.
- Being slower to react or think things through.
- Getting less able to juggle difficult tasks, especially when distracted.
- Making bad decisions occasionally.
- Having trouble finding the right words at times.
- Needing to concentrate hard to keep up with the conversation.
- Going into a room and forgetting why you're there but remembering again quickly.
- Age-related vision changes such as cataracts or other changes in the eyes, such as misty and cloudy vision.
- Sometimes being weary of work, family, or social obligations.
- Sometimes feeling a bit low or anxious.

Dementia

- Forgetting the names of close friends and family or forgetting recent events- for example, visitors you had that day.
- Asking for the same information over and over – for e.g., where are my keys?
- Putting objects in unusual places – for e.g., putting your house keys in the bathroom cabinet.
- Getting very confused when planning on thinking things through.
- Having a lot of difficulty concentrating.
- Frequent poor judgment when dealing with money or when assessing risks.
- Having frequent problems finding the right word or frequently referring to the object as “that thing”.
- Having trouble following or joining a conversation.
- Getting lost, not knowing where you are in a familiar place.
- Problems interpreting visual information, for e.g., having trouble judging distances on stairs or misinterpreting patterns such as a carpet or reflections.
- Becoming withdrawn and losing interest in work, socializing, or hobbies.
- Getting unusually sad, anxious, frightened, or low in self-confidence.

