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Dementia is an umbrella term used to describe a collection of brain diseases and their symptoms. It is associated with an ongoing decline of the brain and its abilities- such as cognition, memory and behaviour.

MEMORIES
matter



Did you know?

- Dementia is NOT a part of normal ageing.
- It usually affects older people; One in two of us will be affected by dementia in our lifetime, either by caring for someone with the condition, developing it ourselves, or both. Dementia can develop in younger people but is less common.
- The estimated growth of people living with dementia is set to rise from 55 million in 2019 to 139 million in 2050 (Source: ADI).
- Dementia is chronic and progressive and causes irreversible damage to brain cells. There is currently no cure.
- Dementia is the seventh leading cause of death and one of the major causes of disability and dependency among older people globally (Source: World Health Organisation).
- There are over 100 forms of dementia, with the most well-known form of dementia being Alzheimer's disease.

What is Dementia?

Association for Dementia and
Alzheimer's of South Africa NPC

www.adasa.org.za

Types

→ Alzheimer's Disease

Currently, this is the most known type of dementia. It is characterised by Amyloid plaques and beta-tangles that form inside and in-between brain cells. Symptoms include impairment in memory, ability to think & reason, language, and visuospatial skills.

→ Vascular Dementia

Characterised by disease or injury to the blood vessels leading to the brain. (Strokes). Symptoms include impaired motor skills, judgment, and language impairments.

→ Frontotemporal Dementia

Is characterised by deterioration of the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain resulting in symptoms such as personality changes, inappropriate behaviour, and language difficulties.

→ Lewy-body Dementia

Characterised by Lewy-body protein deposits on brain cells. Symptoms include hallucinations, disordered sleep, impaired thinking, and motor skills.

→ HIV-related Dementia

HIV-associated dementia is a chronic cognitive deterioration due to brain infection by HIV. It is a serious consequence of HIV infection and is typically seen in the advanced stages of the disease.

Other: Dementia-related to Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, Crutzfeldt-Jakob disease, Korsakoff-syndrome, and many more.

Risk Factors

Several risk factors can increase one's chance of developing dementia. These risk factors can be either modifiable (changeable) and not-modifiable (unchangeable).

Reduce your risk of developing dementia by maintaining a healthy lifestyle through:

- Regular exercise.
- Eating a healthy balanced diet.
- Not drinking more than the safe recommended limit of alcohol.
- Don't smoke.
- Manage chronic health problems such as high blood pressure (hypertension), diabetes, and high cholesterol.
- Get enough sleep.
- Stay involved socially.
- Engage in intellectually stimulating activities such as reading, doing cross-word puzzles, sudoku, or any other mind-stretching games.

Warning Signs

In most cases, dementia symptoms progress gradually over several years. The early signs, usually memory problems may not be immediately obvious. Symptoms vary and forgetting things is a normal part of aging, but those with dementia often have one or more of the following:

- Memory problems (short-term).
- Diminished ability to plan activities.
- Problems with language and communication.
- General confusion, disorientation in time and/or place.
- Difficulty with abstract thinking, lapses in judgment.
- Difficulty performing a familiar activity.
- Misplacing objects and problems keeping track of things.
- Behaviour and personality changes.
- Sudden mood swings.
- Challenges in understanding visual and spatial information.
- Loss of initiative or apathy.

Diagnosis

There is no one dementia test, so diagnosis can be challenging and will require several visits to your doctor or specialist.

Step 1: Consult your doctor or local clinic if you are concerned about yourself or a loved one. Do not attempt to self-diagnose. Your doctor will review your medical history and symptoms and conduct a physical examination.

Step 2: Doctors may order several tests for dementia diagnosis to rule out other, sometimes reversible conditions such as depression, hormonal imbalance, thyroid problems, head injuries or vitamin deficiencies.

Step 3: After an initial diagnosis of dementia, a referral is made to a specialist (Neurologist, Psychiatrist) who will conduct other tests and brain scans to confirm the diagnosis.

Step 4: There is no cure for dementia, but a lot can be done to support people living with the illness and those caring for them. Contact your local ADASA office for assistance post-diagnosis or any other queries.

Contact Us



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