



Bermuda Hospitals Board

# What is Dementia?

Dementia is a general term for loss of memory, language, problem-solving and other thinking abilities that are severe enough to interfere with daily life. It is not a single disease; it is an overall term that covers a wide range of specific medical conditions including:

- ◆ Alzheimer Disease (50-75%)
- ◆ Vascular Dementia (20-30%)
- ◆ Lewy Body Dementia (10-25%)
- ◆ Fronto-Temporal Dementia (15%)
- ◆ Parkinson's Disease
- ◆ Mixed Dementia
- ◆ Korsakoff Syndrome
- ◆ HIV-Associated Dementia
- ◆ Others

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



### Can dementia be prevented?

There are no proven ways to prevent dementia, but here are some things that can help keep the brain healthy: physical activity, clean healthy diet and social interaction.

### Are there tests I should have?

Your doctor will decide which tests you should have based on your individual situation. You might undergo cognitive screening that looks at how you answer questions and do certain tasks. Your doctor might want to do a brain scan (CT or MRI) to make sure your symptoms are not caused by a problem unrelated to dementia.

There are many other dementia tests. The ones above are available in Bermuda.

### Can dementia be treated?

If you have Alzheimer disease, there are medicines that might help delay progression. If you have vascular dementia, your doctor will address your blood pressure and cholesterol to help reduce further damage to the brain. Sadly, there really are no good treatments for most types of dementia, but doctors can sometimes treat troubling symptoms that come with dementia, such as depression or anxiety.

# What is Dementia?



## ALZHEIMER DISEASE (50-75%)

Alzheimer disease is the most common cause of dementia. It is a disorder in which brain cells slowly die over time.



## VASCULAR DEMENTIA (20-30%)

Vascular dementia happens when parts of the brain do not get enough blood. This can happen when blood vessels in the brain get blocked with blood clots or damaged by high blood pressure or aging. This form of dementia is most common among people who have had strokes or who are at risk for strokes.



## LEWY BODY DEMENTIA (10-25%)

A type of progressive dementia caused by abnormal microscopic deposits that damage brain cells over time. It is named after the neurologist who discovered the protein deposits during autopsy.



## FRONTO-TEMPORAL DEMENTIA (15%)

This is caused by progressive nerve cell loss in the brain's frontal lobes and temporal lobes. Deterioration of nerve cells in these areas affects speech, language, behaviour and personality.



## PARKINSON'S DISEASE

The brain changes caused by Parkinson's Disease begin in a region that plays a key role in movement, leading to early symptoms such as tremors and shakiness, among others. As these brain changes gradually spread, they often begin to affect mental functions, including memory and the ability to pay attention, make sound judgments and complete tasks.



## MIXED DEMENTIA

A person can also have more than one type of dementia. This is called mixed dementia. The most common type is the combination of Alzheimer and vascular dementia.



## HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE

A progressive brain disorder caused by a single defective genetic code, leads to brain changes that cause abnormal involuntary movements, a severe decline in thinking and reasoning skills and other mood changes.



## KORSAKOFF SYNDROME

This is a chronic memory disorder typically caused by alcohol misuse.



## HIV-ASSOCIATED DEMENTIA

This occurs when HIV virus spreads to the brain.



## OTHERS:

There are some infections that are thought to be linked to Alzheimer including oral herpes, pneumonia, and infection with Spirochete bacteria (the type that cause Lyme disease). This is not to be confused with reversible infection-induced delirium that may mimic the symptoms of dementia. Down syndrome and rheumatoid arthritis are among the conditions that have also been linked to dementia.