

Dementia describes a group of symptoms affecting memory, thinking and social abilities severely enough to interfere with your daily life. It isn't a specific disease, but several different diseases may cause dementia. Though dementia generally involves memory loss, memory loss has different causes. Having memory loss alone doesn't mean you have dementia.



Symptoms

Dementia symptoms vary depending on the cause, but common signs and symptoms include:

- Anxiety
- Cognitive changes
- Depression
- Difficulty handling complex tasks
- Difficulty with coordination and motor functions
- Difficulty with planning and organizing
- Inappropriate behavior
- Paranoia
- Agitation
- Confusion and disorientation
- Difficulty communicating or finding words
- Difficulty reasoning or problem-solving
- Difficulty with visual and spatial abilities, such as getting lost while driving
- Hallucinations
- Memory Loss
- Personality changes

Causes

Dementia is caused by damage to or loss of nerve cells and their connections in the brain. Depending on the area of the brain that's affected by the damage, dementia can affect people differently and cause different symptoms.

Complications

Dementia can affect many body systems and, therefore, the ability to function. Dementia can lead to:

- **Poor nutrition.** Many people with dementia eventually reduce or stop eating, affecting their nutrient intake. Ultimately, they may be unable to chew and swallow.
- **Pneumonia.** Difficulty swallowing increases the risk of choking or aspirating food into the lungs, which can block breathing and cause pneumonia.
- **Inability to perform self-care tasks.** As dementia progresses, it can interfere with bathing, dressing, brushing hair or teeth, using the toilet independently, and taking medications accurately.
- **Personal safety challenges.** Some day-to-day situations can present safety issues for people with dementia, including driving, cooking and walking alone.
- **Death.** Late-stage dementia results in coma and death, often from infection.