



If you or someone you care about has been diagnosed with dementia, you might have questions about the diagnosis or what the future holds. Below are frequently asked questions to help you plan ahead:

What is dementia?

Dementia is a word used to describe brain changes that lead to memory loss or trouble thinking. This could cause changes in language, reasoning, or other mental abilities. These symptoms make daily activities more challenging.

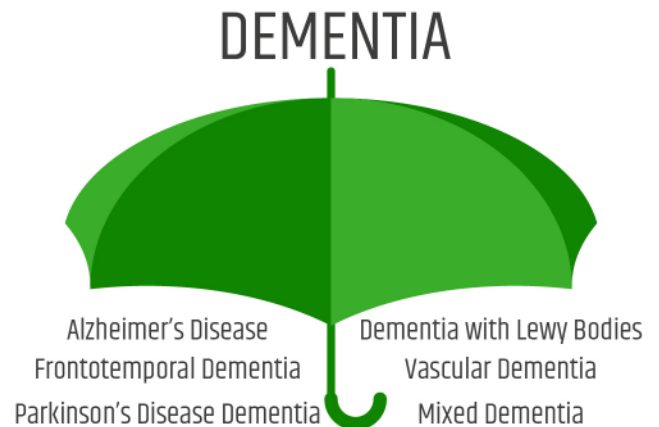
What causes dementia?

Dementia is caused by disease that damages brain cells. Damage leads to changes in the way we think, communicate, or behave. This can happen because of:

- A build up of proteins in the brain
- Low blood flow to the brain or brain areas

A variety of diseases can cause dementia. Alzheimer's is the most common, but there are many others. Early on, it can be difficult for physicians to pinpoint exactly which disease a person has.

Learn more about the science of dementia here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBR2XF4NPsk>



Will the dementia get worse?

Many diseases that cause dementia are not curable. These are called degenerative dementias because they do get worse over time. However, each person's brain is different, so there is no strict timeline of progression. Some people live independently for many years with help from their support network. Other people may need more support earlier in the disease.

What steps can be taken to slow the progression?

Treat underlying condition that make symptoms worse. Conditions might include:

- Chronic illnesses like diabetes or heart disease
- Medication complications
- Sensory conditions like hearing loss



Ways to be brain healthy:

- Stay physically active
- Avoid smoking and reduce alcohol intake
- Get fresh air
- Maintain a healthy diet and sleep habits
- Socialize with others and build a support network
- Keep your mind active

Find out more tips for brain health here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McfPrxUyhPo>

Medications cannot stop the progression of dementia but can sometimes help reduce the symptoms:

- Talk to your doctor about your options.
- Learn more about medications for dementia here: <https://mkodsorcwebsiteunago.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/Medication-Round-14082020.pdf>

Does dementia completely change a person?

A person is *living with* dementia. This means that dementia is something they are diagnosed with, but it is not who they are.

Sometimes, dementia changes a person's emotions and behaviours. This will depend on which parts of the brain are affected, the care the person receives, and their unique personality. In fact, people are like gems. We are all unique and complex. We have strength and weaknesses that change over time. A person living with dementia is no different. Learn more here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6UVjp_y8HY

Does a person with dementia lose all their independence?

People keep many of their abilities for a long time. However, as dementia progresses, a person becomes more dependent on others. Having help with daily tasks can go a long way to staying healthy longer. Some days will be easier than others.

Can a person with dementia still make important life decisions?

Being diagnosed with dementia does not automatically mean that a person cannot make decisions. Everyone has the right to maximize their independence. Over time, decisions might become more difficult to make alone. After receiving a diagnosis, make sure to talk early to a trusted person or people about wishes. Plan ahead together to help stay involved in decisions as long as possible.

Learn more about advanced care planning here: <https://www.speakupontario.ca/resources-for-individuals-and-families/>

How can I meet others who have dementia?

Contact the Dementia Society of Ottawa and Renfrew County to:

- Join a support group for people diagnosed with dementia or mild cognitive impairment
- Join a social program such as music, exercise, or lunch meet-ups for people with dementia.
- Learn about dementia and what to expect.

Ottawa: 613-523-4004 **Renfrew-County:** 1-888-411-2067 | info@dsorc.org | DementiaHelp.ca

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