



Mixed Dementia

Dementia includes a wide range of symptoms that affect memory, thinking, behaviour and the ability to perform everyday activities.

Mixed Dementia is more common than it was previously thought. More than half of all people with Alzheimer's Disease have another type of dementia at the same time, a condition called Mixed Dementia.

Mixed Dementia is not a "one size fits all" disorder. Symptoms can differ between individuals.

The brain is a person's "headquarters". Mixed Dementia is a combination of more than one type of dementia. The underlying diseases damage the brain. This brain damage leads to symptoms which fall into the general category we describe as "dementia". Dementia is progressive which means symptoms will gradually worsen. New symptoms appear as the diseases spread in the brain and damage new regions.

Symptoms

Dementia can affect these functions:

- Memory
- Thinking
- Judgment
- Learning capacity
- Language
- Difficulty with orientation
- Comprehension

Symptoms vary according to the types of dementia that are combined. Therefore, a person can have Mixed Dementia and present some of the following symptoms:

- Memory loss that affects day-to-day activities
- Challenges with performing familiar tasks
- Confusion about time and place
- Challenges with language
- Challenges with abstract thinking
- Misplacing items
- Changes in mood or behaviour
- Changes in judgment
- Loss of initiative
- Changes to personality

Causes

The causes of Mixed Dementia vary depending on the pairing. Most frequently, Alzheimer's Disease and Vascular Dementia are combined in Mixed Dementia.



Diagnostic

Mixed Dementia is difficult to diagnose because the symptoms may vary greatly according to which types of dementia are combined.

The diagnosis of Mixed Dementia requires careful evaluation to rule out other possible causes. It is important to correctly diagnose the types of dementia because some medications may be beneficial to one type but have adverse reactions for another. A correct diagnosis allows for access to treatment and planning for the future.

No single test can detect Mixed Dementia. Rather, experts use a combination of tests to rule out other possibilities. Generally, the assessment starts with the family physician followed by a referral to a specialist.

Tests of mental abilities and brain scans play an important role in making a diagnosis. Tests of mental abilities are a way of clinically observing symptoms and their seriousness. Brain scans can show damage in specific areas of the brain.

Heredity

For all types of dementia, very few cases are hereditary. However, researchers think that the combination of risk factors increases a person's predisposition of developing dementia.

We can act on some risk factors such as smoking, obesity and lack of physical activity. For this reason, the scientific and medical communities have put an emphasis in recent years on identifying risk factors and building prevention strategies.

Things to remember:

- The exact symptoms experienced by a person can be different from one individual to another.
- It is believed that the pairing of two types of dementia may have an impact on the brain greater than either type by itself.
- Mixed Dementia is difficult to diagnose because the symptoms may vary greatly according to which types of dementia are combined.
- Establishing the correct diagnosis can take time but allows for access to treatment and future planning.
- Research and clinical trials are underway to identify new treatments for Mixed Dementia. Until then, we know we can improve quality of life by addressing modifiable risk factors.
- Contact the Dementia Society. No One Should Face Dementia Alone™

References

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