

DEMENTIA

What is it?

Dementia isn't a disease. It's a group of symptoms. It's a brain disorder that often affects the elderly and is caused by the failure or death of nerve cells in the brain. Other than aging, other factors can raise your risk for developing dementia: smoking, uncontrolled diabetes, high blood pressure, drinking too much alcohol, and a family history of dementia.

Most forms of dementia worsen gradually over time and can't be corrected. The NIH lists these symptoms that may interfere with everyday life.

- Repeating the same story or question over and over
- Getting lost in familiar places
- Delusions or agitated behavior
- Problems with language, movements, or recognizing objects
- Memory or concentration problems
- Difficulty following directions
- Getting disoriented about time, people, and places
- Neglecting personal safety, hygiene, and nutrition

For some types of dementia, such as Alzheimer's, a definite diagnosis cannot be made (at least while the person is living). Although testing is being developed along with some types of medications, dementia is often recognized by others first and told to doctors when reviewing a physical and mental health history.

