

DEMENTIA – FACT SHEET

Dementia is the umbrella term used to describe a number of conditions which include Alzheimer's, Head Injury Associated, Lewy Body's and Frontal Lobe Dementia.

Symptoms:

- Failing memory
- Changes in mood, personality and behavior
- Impaired reasoning
- Impaired ability to learn new things
- A high susceptibility to stress (anxiety, fear and panic)
- Acute sensitivity to social and built environment. Increasing dependence on the senses.

The two most common types of dementia are Alzheimer's and Vascular dementia. These are conditions of the brain damaging the brain. It is terminal. Dementia affects every person differently, but progression is the same.

Alzheimer's:

- Caused by changes in the brain that result from the production of plaques and tangles that cause the nerve cells to die. These changes are irreversible.
- As each part of the brain is damaged, it loses its ability to function.

Vascular:

- Caused by the person having tiny strokes that damage the brain.
- Symptoms stay the same between strokes and the brain is able to mend itself and compensate for a little damage.
- Able to temporarily regain some functions before further deterioration.

People with intellectual disabilities are three to four times more likely to develop dementia than the general population. 22% of individuals with intellectual disabilities over the age of 65 have dementia.

Individuals with Down Syndrome develop dementia at a much higher rate due to their genetic predisposition. Progression is varied and faster from a few years to 8 years. General population and individuals with other intellectual disabilities progress from 8 years to 15 years.

There are two kinds of memory, short and long term memory. Long term memory is the one most people with dementia revert too as they are unable to retain new memories.

Early Signs:

- Skills, memory & apathy
- Loss of interest
- Withdrawal of spontaneous communication
- Disorientation & confusion
- Night-time waking
- Increased wandering & seizures (begin 2-3 years after onset)