



Memory Care Handbook


StoneBridge
SENIOR LIVING
Maryland Heights

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Signs & Symptoms of Dementia

Dementia is a condition that should not be taken lightly. The symptoms, including memory and language loss, impair your ability to think to the extent that it interferes with everyday life. As a result, we believe you should educate yourself as much as possible. Knowing what causes dementia to occur, as well as what the signs and symptoms are, can actually bring you and your family some peace of mind.

We believe in working together with families to help reduce the anxiety related to caring for a loved one with dementia. We are here to help prepare you for your family's journey forward.

Unfortunately there isn't a cure for dementia, however, there are some treatments to lessen the symptoms, both cognitive and psychological.

COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS

Common symptoms relative to thinking and brain activity include:

- Memory loss
- Trouble communicating fluently without stuttering
- Trouble handling complex or sometimes simple tasks
- Trouble with planning and organizing (especially with time and money)
- Difficulty reasoning or problem solving
- Difficulty with coordination and motor functions
- Confusion or disorientation

When one thinks of dementia, memory loss is easily one of the first and most common symptoms. Did you know memory loss associated with dementia or Alzheimer's is most likely to happen in people 60 and above? It's true. But not all memory loss symptoms are created equal.

It's easy to come to a blanket conclusion about dementia and memory loss, but keep in mind not everyone experiences it the same way or even at the same age. Memory loss as associated with dementia can actually be of the short or long-term variety. The experienced memory care staff at StoneBridge plays an important role in caring for our residents in every situation. Each need is unique. Each resident is unique. And our trusted staff is equipped and certified to care for them individually.

A person with dementia will also be unable to think clearly and will likely struggle with normal, everyday tasks. Tasks will turn into failures resulting in a much more damaging output. These are major changes for everyone involved,

especially caregivers who are left to not only make sense of them, but must also provide reassurance and assistance.

Individuals dealing with dementia tend to get lost easily and lose track of things. Their mind will tick in the moment when dementia hits, leaving them unable to recognize where they are and even who came with them.

Our staff is trained to deliver care to residents who suffer these types of symptoms on a daily basis. We lead with compassion first and foremost. Even if they don't remember the name of the person who helped them, they will remember that our team made them feel better and feel comforted. This is why we do what we do.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS

When a person suffers from dementia, not only are there effects on the brain associated with diminished reasoning and logic, there are also mental and behavioral changes that can occur. These signs and symptoms can include:

- Personality changes, such as a normally quiet person becoming loud and aggressive, or vice versa
- Sadness or depression
- Anxiety, worrying about things for no specific reason
- Inappropriate behavior, such as being rude or lacking good manners
- Paranoia, being convinced that people are spying on them or out to get them
- Agitation or nervousness, even in familiar situations
- Hallucinations, seeing things and people that aren't there (50% of people with Parkinson's experience this)

Understanding fully the signs and symptoms of dementia and what to look for, whether you or a loved one may be experiencing its beginning stages, is important. It's also important to note that not all of these symptoms are solely associated with a diagnosis of dementia. For example, there are medications that can cause memory loss or even behavioral changes. Stress or lack of sleep can also play a role in experiencing some of these same symptoms.

Having a personal conversation with your doctor is key to pinpointing what's really going on. If it is indeed something caused by medication, there are ways to manage stress and other symptoms without medication or by trying alternate medications with fewer side effects. Sleep, as mentioned, can also help improve one's health when good habits are adopted.

At StoneBridge, we have the ability to administer medication for residents, but we don't like to treat symptoms of our memory care residents with medication due to

side effects. We prefer holistic treatments when possible and go the extra mile to ensure residents are happy, healthy and living an authentic lifestyle every single day.

Types of Dementia

When hearing the word dementia, most people think of Alzheimer's. Did you know, however, that there are several different types of dementia? Knowing each type and understanding the differences will help you learn what to expect and decide on the proper treatment when necessary.

The most common types of dementia, in addition to Alzheimer's, include:

VASCULAR DEMENTIA

Vascular dementia accounts for about 10 percent of dementia cases and is the result of problems with the blood vessels that supply the brain. It often develops after the person has had a stroke. A person with vascular dementia will not have the degree of memory loss of a person with Alzheimer's, but they will have trouble thinking, planning and organizing.

The course of the illness is unpredictable because the location, number and size of the brain injuries from one or more strokes will determine whether dementia will result and how the individual's thinking and physical function will be affected.

MIXED DEMENTIA

A person can have brain changes resulting from more than one cause, such as vascular dementia and Parkinson's. In this case, they are said to have mixed dementia. This is most likely to occur in people over 85.

DEMENTIA WITH LEWY BODIES (DLB)

Lewy bodies are protein clumps that can clog the cerebral cortex, leading to memory and thinking problems. People with this condition often have trouble sleeping and visual hallucinations. They sometimes exhibit similar symptoms to those with Parkinson's disease. The symptoms/course of the disease will vary depending on the movement of the Lewy bodies. Normal moments can be followed by sudden declines into dementia.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

As Parkinson's disease progresses, it often results in dementia similar to dementia with Lewy bodies or Alzheimer's. The main symptoms are problems with movement, such as slowness, rigidity, and changes in gait and tremors (the shakes). With Parkinson's, Lewy bodies form in an area deep in the brain called the substantia nigra. They cause degeneration of the nerve cells that produce dopamine, an essential neurotransmitter or chemical which controls movement.

Famed boxer Muhammad Ali developed Parkinson's after his sports career and lived with it for many years. The actor Michael J. Fox was diagnosed with Parkinson's at a very young age, but lifestyle strategies and medication help him manage the disease on a daily basis.

FRONTOTEMPORAL LOBAL DEGENERATION (FTLD)

FTLD affects the frontotemporal area of the brain and results in personality and behavior changes, as well as difficulty with language. Nerve cells in the front and side regions of the brain are the main targets. It is also more noticeable in people at a younger age: 60% of people with FTLD are aged 45 to 60. It accounts for approximately 10% of all dementia cases.

CREUTZFELDT-JAKOB DISEASE

CJD is the most common human form of a group of rare, fatal brain disorders affecting people and certain other mammals. It is often referred to as "mad cow disease" and is thought to result from eating animal products from infected cows. It is a fatal disease that impairs memory and coordination and causes behavior changes as the proteins in the brain all start to malfunction.

HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE

Huntington's disease is a progressive brain disorder caused by a single defective gene on chromosome 4. Symptoms include tremors and jerking, a severe decline in thinking and reasoning skills as well as irritability, depression and other mood changes. The symptoms will get worse over time as more of the proteins in the brain are affected.

WERNICKE-KORSAKOFF SYNDROME

This syndrome is a chronic memory disorder caused by severe deficiency of thiamine (vitamin B1), usually the result of chronic alcoholism. Symptoms include poor memory, though otherwise thinking will seem normal. Getting more B1 and cutting back on alcohol should restore the natural balance in the brain.

Our professional and compassionate staff at StoneBridge have the ability to provide the highest level of care for each resident in our memory care program. We understand the special needs of residents with dementia, and our memory care program allows them a full day of engagement and activities based on their unique condition.

While there are many different types of dementia, StoneBridge embraces each resident like family and ensures they feel right at home no matter the challenges. Am I or a loved one experiencing signs of Alzheimer's?

Alzheimer's is one of the most well known types of dementia, and we get a lot of questions concerning this disease. To help provide a few answers, we wanted to offer some specifics with regard to symptoms that could accompany Alzheimer's.

As more people age, many are concerned about developing Alzheimer's. They can often become disturbed by changes in their memory and fear the worst. But not all dementia is Alzheimer's, so here are some warning signs:

1. The memory loss is so severe, it disrupts daily activities. In this case, the person is unable to remember simple things or perform regular daily activities. They start to become more dependent and unable to handle things on their own.
2. The person has trouble with planning and simple tasks. Many older people find themselves having trouble managing their finances and paying bills, following recipes, and taking much longer than usual to complete simple tasks.
3. Technology becomes more challenging. The person finds it hard to use familiar household items, such as a computer or microwave.
4. Confusion with time or location begins to increase. They lose track of hours and days and are often confused about where they are and how they got there.
5. Vision problems begin to increase. There are a number of tests a doctor can administer which will reveal typical vision distortion and other issues suffered by those with Alzheimer's.
6. Difficulty speaking or writing. A person with Alzheimer's will start to lose their words and will also have trouble following conversations.
7. Social isolation and a retreat begins to take place. As a result of psychological changes and trouble communicating, those with Alzheimer's often withdraw from family and friends, which can actually worsen their condition.
8. Losing things becomes common. The person will often lose things like keys and money.
9. Decreased or poor judgment begins happening more often. People with Alzheimer's may also experience changes in judgment or decision making. For example, they may use poor judgment when dealing with money, such as giving large amounts to telemarketers. They may pay less attention to grooming or keeping themselves clean.

10. The changes in mood become more frequent. The most common change is depression, but mood changes might also manifest as anxiety or aggression.

These signs and symptoms can help identify Alzheimer's so that the best possible help can be sought.

Treatments for Dementia

The idea that you or a loved one might be dealing with a diagnosis of dementia is scary to think about. It's a condition that is still being studied and researched and there currently is no cure. Similar to cancer, finding a cure for dementia requires a great deal of funding, research and time. There's still hope for the future, but for now, we look to ways that we can minimize dementia with what we do know about it.

If you're diagnosed with dementia, start with trying to slow down its progression. Experts suggest trying some exercises and brain teasers to keep your mind active and engaged as much as possible.

At StoneBridge, we plan a full day of engaging activities for all of our memory care residents from the time they get up in the morning until the end of the day. This includes both physical and cognitive stimulation with our staff and other residents. The results and response have been very positive and we love approaching their treatment from a holistic point of view rather than solely relying on medications.

We know that medications and treatments help to lessen the symptoms of dementia and are important to help maintain quality of life. Rehab may be needed in cases that have uncontrollable symptoms as dementia progresses. Also, depression is typically present due to the psychological toll dementia takes on the individual. Pain relievers, antidepressants and antihistamines are examples of medications typically used to treat these common symptoms.

With mild, moderate or severe dementia, inhibitors may be used to treat patients with Alzheimer's disease and hallucinations. As with any medication, there is a risk of side effects. This is another major reason why we try to avoid heavy medication when possible for our residents. Our certified staff takes care of each resident and makes decisions based on their individual needs.

Risk Factors for Dementia and How to Prevent Them

People today are living longer than they did in previous generations and this includes many different population types. Naturally, there is now a greater concern amongst the older population as to whether they will develop dementia, especially Alzheimer's.

When an individual or family member is dealing with a possible diagnosis of dementia or concerned about risks and symptoms, our compassionate team is there to provide support. We are available to answer all your questions and provide much needed peace of mind during times of uncertainty.

One way that we can help offer support is through education concerning possible risk factors. The latest research is yielding valuable information on dementia risk factors, in the hopes of helping to reduce these risks for those who identify with them.

AGE

The older you get, the more likely you are to develop dementia. It is important to note that not all dementia is Alzheimer's. One in nine people over 65 and one in three people over 85 have Alzheimer's.

FAMILY HISTORY

Anyone with a parent, brother or sister with Alzheimer's is more likely to develop the disease. Scientists are not sure if this is due to genetics, environment or both. Genetic tests are available for both APOE e4 and the rare genes that directly cause Alzheimer's. Those with the APOE e4 gene tend to develop dementia at a younger age. Doctors are now seeing dementia and Alzheimer's in patients in their late 40s and early 50s.

RACE

Latinos are 1.5 times more likely and blacks two times more likely to develop dementia as compared with whites. This is believed to be attributed to poor cardiovascular health and eating habits (consuming lots of carbohydrates and fried foods).

DIET

Sugar has been called "white death" in relation to what it does to the body and brain. A diet low in carbohydrates seems to be protective.

ALUMINUM IS NOT A CAUSE

Aluminum was once blamed for Alzheimer's through antacids, soda cans and so on supposedly leaching aluminum into our foods. Fast forward to the present day, and no study has ever confirmed this.

DIABETES

Diabetes is commonly linked with Alzheimer's. In fact, Alzheimer's is being called Type 4 diabetes by some. Diabetes poses a significant challenge in terms of heart and brain health. Tight glucose control can decrease one's risk of developing diabetic complications or worsening heart health and dementia.

CONCUSSION/HEAD INJURY

There is a growing body of evidence that there may be a strong link between serious head injury and future risk of Alzheimer's, especially when trauma occurs repeatedly or involves a loss of consciousness. It's easy to stay safe. Don't engage in contact sports. Always wear a seatbelt in the car. Check your home to make sure there are no danger spots for slips, trips and falls. Learn more about concussions and traumatic brain injury (TBI) and how to avoid them.

THE HEART AND BRAIN CONNECTION

Cardiovascular health is strongly linked to brain health. As we age, we often develop high blood pressure, which has been linked to heart attack and stroke. Narrowing of blood vessels can diminish essential oxygen supplies to certain parts of the brain, diminishing its ability to function properly. Eat a heart-healthy diet and exercise regularly.

EXERCISE

Exercise has been shown to protect against dementia. In fact, in people with Alzheimer's, it has even been shown to reduce symptoms.

DON'T SMOKE

Smoking is bad for the heart, brain and the entire body. If you smoke, it's time to quit.

AVOID ALCOHOL

Alcohol is known to damage brain cells. It also has a great deal of sugar in it, which is harmful to the brain.

Many of these risks and factors seem like common sense, but regardless of whether you choose to make any changes to your lifestyle, there's still the risk of getting dementia. There isn't a proven formula for prevention, but being aware of these factors can help reduce the risk.

Prevention of Dementia

Dementia is not an easy condition to manage and, as mentioned before, it unfortunately does not have a cure. Not only does StoneBridge compassionately serve individuals within our care, we also educate and offer support to their families. We hope to provide peace of mind by helping people take better care of their bodies and minds.

Dementia is actually a condition that is caused by a group of symptoms that affect daily life. The cause is linked to the loss of or damage to nerve cells that connect to the brain. Depending on the part of the brain that is damaged, dementia can cause different symptoms. So, you may be wondering, is there any way to prevent dementia?

There are many ways to lessen the probability of a person being diagnosed with dementia. A healthy and active lifestyle is key if you're truly concerned about a dementia diagnosis.

Another way to combat dementia is to have a healthy and active mind. Daily routines that involve problem solving, reading and eating healthy brain food will help diminish your chances of having dementia. Dementia usually targets people over 60 years of age, but trying to prevent it at an early age is a beneficial long-term investment.

No matter if you're worried about dementia or not, one should be active socially. Having a good social circle of at least one or two people will help keep your mind in an active state. When you have a good social life, you are more likely to hang out with your friends during the day and in the evenings. Planned social activities are one way StoneBridge helps our Memory Care residents.

Our caring staff and daily activities help to diminish dementia symptoms and keep our residents active in a variety of social settings. Residents get the opportunity to socialize with other residents while doing both cognitively and physically engaging activities that they enjoy. Quality of life is important to us, and we feel our

Memory Care program is designed to meet that goal for each and every one of our residents and their unique situation.

Some other things that are likely to increase the probability of a dementia diagnosis are anxiety, high blood pressure, depression and stress. Stress tends to slow down the usage of the brain, making your five senses less active. This is most likely to happen to someone in their 60s who has been diagnosed with dementia. This progressive condition can be congenital or hereditary and its onset may be affected by every day routine and lifestyle choices.

Pursuing an education also plays an important role in preventing dementia. To be able to lower the risk of having dementia, your mind should be as active as possible. Regular and daily brain exercises and problem solving as it relates to learning and studying help enhance and utilize your brain.

Finally, it's no secret that a healthy diet is the key to a healthy life. This is no different when it comes to preventing a dementia diagnosis. It is well documented that having a good balanced diet and healthy brain foods will help prevent many diseases, aside from dementia. Studies show that eating fruits and vegetables as part of a daily routine will help your mind work in an active state, thus making your five senses keenly effective. One key to preventing dementia is to consistently maintain at least the minimum active state.

We're here to help be a support no matter what you're going through, and we want to be a resource for you and your family. Don't hesitate to reach out and ask questions about dementia or Alzheimer's and steps you can take toward management and prevention.

Nutrition and Dementia

There is no sure approach to prevent dementia. However, a healthy, nutritious diet can help reduce the risk and help you stay in good shape. It can likewise lessen your chances of developing cardiovascular illnesses, strokes and heart attacks.

It's no secret that a healthy, balanced diet can prevent serious illnesses. Food is one of the things you can control for yourself, so this is an excellent place to do some research and take action.

Our residents enjoy well balanced meals and snacks throughout the day, and we're proud to be able to help foster a healthy lifestyle for them while in our care. To diminish the danger of dementia and other harmful health conditions, it's recommended that you:

- Have a sound eating routine
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Exercise consistently
- Limit your alcohol intake
- Stop smoking (in the event that you smoke)
- Keep your heart rate at a normal level

We all have the goals to eat modestly and wholesomely. However, our schedules, anxiety level, and social interactions can easily distract us from our goals. As we age, our bodies require fewer calories, and the individuals who can control their food intake endure less psychological debilitation than people who splurge and overeat. To build nourishment while eating less, you must make calories count and consider what you're eating very carefully. So, what foods are best for us to eat? Luckily, it's not complicated. It just so happens many foods which have gained a lot of praise in the past several years are very healthy for you.

KEY FOODS

Beans and vegetables control glucose and provide B-complex vitamins, which may inhibit cerebrum shrinkage. The vitamin C from citrus fruit, bell peppers, and strawberries may help forestall dementia-related mind plaque, and additionally support strong veins for cerebrum wellbeing.

A preparatory study demonstrated that Alzheimer's patients have lower vitamin C levels than their unaffected peers. Almonds are a decent wellspring of vitamin E and in the event that you have elevated amounts of E in your blood, your risk level may be 25% lower.

Low omega-3 levels have been connected with mind shrinkage and lower scores on memory tests. Meals consisting of salmon, sardines, and other low-mercury greasy fish are a simple way to meet your omega-3 needs. Additionally, the DHA in fish is critical for your heart, which provides nourishment to the brain.

Two to three servings of fish every week could diminish the likelihood of dementia by 50%. Supplements such as krill oil can likewise fill this requirement for non-fish eaters. Berries, green tea, red wine, chocolate, citrus and kale are among numerous sublime nourishments to help your flavonoids. Another noteworthy benefit to these supplements is their ability to hinder overall disease development.

In years past, coffee was seen as having little health benefit. More recently, however, it has made news for its medical advantages. Studies suggest that direct espresso utilization (around three little mugs a day – hold the sugar) can help prevent brain degeneration. In a detailed study of women with signs of early onset dementia, those with no caffeine in their blood were significantly more inclined to advance toward Alzheimer’s than those with moderate caffeine levels.

These superfoods can change your diet for the better, especially if you care about preventing the symptoms of dementia. A brand new diet can be difficult to put into place, but in the long-run positive dietary changes can have a significant impact on your overall health.

Try to adapt to a new diet slowly, and don’t attempt to change your routine overnight. Take it one day and even one food or goal at a time. If you’re consistent, making smart dietary choices will no doubt improve your overall health and wellbeing.

Testing Yourself For Dementia

As you advance in age, you may begin to have thoughts and concerns about developing some type of memory loss. These thoughts can be scary and result in a lot of anxiety. Proper research and education, however, can help offset any unease you may be feeling about your health. This is just as true with dementia or Alzheimer’s as it is with any other type of illness or condition.

The truth is there isn’t one conclusive test that proves a person has dementia or Alzheimer’s disease. A doctor would not provide a diagnosis without first doing a complete assessment which would likely include the following:

- Medical history
- Physical condition
- Neurological status
- Mental abilities
- Physical condition of the brain

If you are concerned you or a loved one may have dementia, there are a variety of tests that may help to provide the information necessary to make a proper diagnosis:

MEDICAL TESTS

If there are real concerns, your first call should be to your doctor, who would likely do a full blood and urine work-up and make their determination based on any

medical conditions that might be discovered. For example, memory problems can be caused by anemia, infection, diabetes, kidney disease, liver disease, vitamin deficiencies, thyroid issues, high blood pressure and cardiovascular problems.

If you have diabetes, test your blood glucose levels regularly and try to maintain tight glucose control. Consider buying a blood pressure monitor so you can check it regularly. Get a cholesterol testing kit and strips.

GENETIC TESTING

Researchers have identified certain genes that increase the risk of developing Alzheimer's and other genes that directly cause Alzheimer's. Most doctors do not recommend genetic testing for these genes. If you have a family history and are concerned with determining whether you are genetically inclined in order to combat it with lifestyle measures, it might be worth it for your peace of mind.

HOME SCREENING TESTS

There are a number of dementia screening tests that have been marketed directly to consumers, but they should never be used as a substitute for a full screening by one or more medical professionals. Even still, they are very popular for people who are concerned about their future health and want to try to find answers on their own.

These tests provide a look into different aspects of cognitive function for an individual, including:

Mental Status

This involves testing your memory and its ability to solve simple problems. It also tests other cognitive skills like remembering words and doing simple math calculations.

Basic Day Knowledge

This test checks your awareness of the date, day of the week, time and your location. A person should be able to correctly identify all of these.

Mini-Mental State Exam (MMSE)

MMSEs are used by health professionals in order to test a range of everyday mental skills. Some of these MMSEs can be found online so individuals can self-administer the test. The varying scores identify the probability of dementia and Alzheimer's. In the case of Alzheimer's, the scores would go down by a few points each year, demonstrating cognitive decline.

Mini-Cog

A mini-cog, or mini-cognitive test, requires a person to complete two tasks. For example:

1. Remember and repeat the names of three common objects after a specified amount of time.
2. Draw a face of a clock showing all 12 numbers in the right places and a time specified by the examiner.

Failure to do both is often an indicator for a follow-up exam by a doctor.

If you're interested in taking a Mini-Cog test, you can take one here:

<https://www.alz.org/media/documents/mini-cog.pdf>

The SAGE test

The self-administered gerocognitive exam (SAGE) is designed to detect early signs of cognitive, memory or thinking problems. You can take it online or administer it to a loved one.

If you're interested in taking the Sage test, you can take it here:

<https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/brain-spine-neuro/memory-disorders/sage>

Computerized Tests Approved by the FDA

There are a number of companies currently creating, marketing, and successfully capturing clients for cognitive testing. One of the biggest is Automated Neuro-psychological Assessment Metrics (ANAM), currently developing more than 200 computer-based tests with the help of the military. Some will be used by doctors, but others should be available to the public online or via mobile in the near future.

Neurotrack

As the name suggests, this test helps track cognitive function over time to detect the degree of decline, if any. These tests might be covered by your health insurance or you may pay a fee.

If you're interested in taking the Neurotrack test, you can take it here:

<https://neurotrack.com>

Memtrax

Memtrax is also a test that can be taken at home online. The first test is free.

If you're interested in taking the Memtrax test, you can take it here:

<https://memtrax.com/test>

None of these tests are guaranteed to provide an absolute diagnosis but they can be very helpful indicators of whether a person has dementia. They should never be used as a substitute for a doctor's diagnosis.

When You Should See A Doctor

We've talked about some signs and symptoms of dementia, but if you truly suspect you or a loved one might be showing signs of dementia, your first step should be to see your doctor. It's only through proper and thorough testing that an actual diagnosis can be made.

There are some common symptoms to watch for if you're feeling like you need to take the extra step and see a doctor. Please take these signs seriously if you notice any changes in yourself or a loved one.

COMMON SIGNS OF DEMENTIA

1. Subtle short-term memory changes, such as not remembering the name of a person you know well or the name of a common object
2. Difficulty following conversations
3. Changes in mood or personality, such as becoming very quiet or aggressive and loud
4. Listlessness; a lack of interest in normal activities
5. Trouble completing normal tasks at work or around the house
6. Confusion, including a general lack of awareness of what day or time it is, where you are and how you got there
7. Difficulty following movies or TV shows
8. Getting lost more often, even in familiar areas
9. The good news is that not all memory loss is dementia, and not all dementia is Alzheimer's. There are plenty of possible contributors to memory loss that don't point to a condition like dementia. Smoking, sleep deprivation and stress are a few of the factors that can affect memory and brain function.

ALTERNATIVE CONTRIBUTORS TO MEMORY LOSS

Smoking reduces the amount of oxygen to the brain and introduces damaging, illicit chemicals that make it complicated for someone to recall a memory. Excessive use of tobacco or drugs can also trigger mild memory loss, even at an early age.

Pain relievers, antidepressants and antihistamines are a few common medications given when you have undergone hospital treatment or surgery. These have been linked to memory loss and could be of concern for older adults.

Sleep deprivation and stress can also cause memory gaps to occur. A person needs good quality sleep in order for memory to function at its best. Having inadequate sleep leads to fatigue that alters your memory recall and interferes with your ability to take in new information and perform everyday tasks. Stress is similar to sleep deprivation in that it makes it difficult for the individual to focus and impairs brain function.

If any of the above apply, consult your doctor. They can work with you to devise a plan to help regulate your lifestyle and work toward improving your overall health. If you're concerned, or you're having symptoms of memory loss, your doctor and other members of your health care team can perform testing, monitoring and provide recommendations for further evaluation and treatment.

EARLY DETECTION IS KEY

As with most medical conditions, early detection can often be the key to a better outcome, rather than a "wait and see" approach.

Your primary care doctor should be your first stop. They will run blood tests and a urinalysis to detect any underlying health issues that might be triggering memory issues. For example, high blood pressure, diabetes and thyroid issues can all lead to memory problems. Should a new medical condition be detected, your doctor can monitor whether or not memory returns following a recommended course of treatment.

BEING REFERRED TO SPECIALISTS

Depending on what the first set of tests reveal, a person suffering from memory loss will usually either be treated or referred to one or more specialists for further testing and evaluation. A specialist can provide a diagnosis of dementia or indicate if the memory loss can be attributed to another brain or health issue.

NEUROLOGIST

A neurologist determines whether the structure of the brain is normal as well as the degree of cognitive function.

PSYCHIATRIST

A psychiatrist can assess whether or not behavioral changes are a sign of dementia or a mood disorder.

GERIATRICIAN

A geriatrician specializes in the medical care of older adults. They can help formulate a treatment plan depending on whether or not the person is suffering from cognitive impairment, dementia or Alzheimer's.

DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

Each doctor will likely administer verbal and written diagnostic tests to the patient. As an established method to help diagnose dementia, the tests will also determine the rate of decline, such as in Alzheimer's.

A doctor might also order CT scans, MRIs and other imaging tests to determine if the structure of the brain has changed in any way, typically attributed to a tumor or stroke. Again, depending on what is found, the doctor will determine a course of treatment or other plan of action to address the memory loss.

No matter what type of specialist you see, a diagnosis of dementia or Alzheimer's isn't one that should be kept to yourself.

Telling Family and Friends

A dementia diagnosis is a life-changing event. Being told you or a loved one has a debilitating medical condition takes a mental and physical toll, but you don't have to face it alone. The truth is you shouldn't face it alone, but it is up to you who you wish to tell and how you wish to tell them. The support of family and friends is invaluable during this time, and that's why we cultivate a supportive, caring family atmosphere in each of our StoneBridge communities.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

To start, it is often best to educate yourself as much as possible. For example, there are several types of dementia, each with its own probable outcome. Every patient is different and the impact is unique to each individual.

Some forms of dementia have standard treatments that are successful and can help you maintain a high quality of life and independence for many years to come. In the

case of Alzheimer's, however, cognitive decline will reach the point where a person can no longer be independent. Most Alzheimer's patients rarely live beyond 10 years after diagnosis.

Access to information is key when receiving a dementia diagnosis. A trusted doctor or social worker can recommend resources to obtain further knowledge and guidance.

AGE

When given a dementia diagnosis, age can certainly be a factor in one's outlook. If you are in your 80s, for example, dementia is more common and therefore less surprising compared to those in the early 40s and 50s developing early onset dementia.

MARITAL STATUS

If you are married or in a relationship, a diagnosis of dementia can be both traumatic and heartbreaking. It can put a real strain on a relationship. It can also be depressing for the person diagnosed, as they dislike the idea of "being a burden" on anyone. For both partners, it can be frightening, because there are no definite answers as to what happens next. While there are treatments for dementia and Alzheimer's, and new ones are emerging all the time, it is unknown as to how each person will respond and the future remains uncertain.

DECIDING WHO TO TELL

Your decision should be based on how close you are to the person and how important it is they know. It can also be based on what you think the person will be able to hear without being devastated by the news. A third consideration is how much that person is likely to remain in your life and give you emotional and perhaps practical support as time goes on.

Sharing your dementia diagnosis with others is an important step toward acceptance. It is understandable to be hesitant to share your diagnosis, given the impact such a disclosure may have for you as well as your family and friends.

The important thing is to feel supported as you cope with your diagnosis. Having family and friends in your corner is key.

PICKING YOUR MOMENT

Some people with dementia find it easier to talk individually with their closest family members or loved ones. Others might organize a gathering of family and friends to tell people all at the same time and answer questions. Find a time when the group is

calm and relaxed. You might also consider writing down important facts. Talk about planning for the future together, and your loved ones should soon start to accept the diagnosis and help you coordinate treatment and care.

Caring for Loved Ones with Dementia

Caring for a loved one with dementia is different for each individual. There is no particular set of rules to adopt, however there are some recommended steps to take to make sure your loved one is well cared for:

CONTRIBUTE

If you are part of a larger family taking care of a parent diagnosed with dementia, do your best to work together and share responsibilities. This is a new challenge and it's not something you want to do alone or want anyone else to take on by themselves. Communicate often and make sure your siblings know you're there to help. If you're not sharing the responsibilities, it can feel extremely overwhelming. If you are not the one to take the lead, make sure the primary caregiver knows you're grateful and provide them as much help and support as you can, when you can.

TAKE ON SOME OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES

In the event that paying bills for a parent or loved one is less demanding than getting on a plane or driving a long distance to visit, then offer assistance. Overseeing property, handling financial details, communicating with family members, coordinating prescriptions and refills and ordering everyday items and supplies are all helpful means by which you can support a loved one regardless of where you live.

MAKE SURE LEGAL DOCUMENTS ARE PREPARED AND ORGANIZED

If you haven't already, now is the time to be proactive and get your legal affairs in order. Proper legal planning can ensure your wishes are met for the future.

Legal planning involves taking inventory of and updating any legal documents, including items such as power of attorney, a living/standard will and a living trust. At this time, you should also discuss with your attorney any financial and property directives and health care and long-term care preferences. Lastly, you will want to identify an individual or individuals who can make decisions on your behalf when you are no longer able. While difficult, these decisions are very important and will be of great value to your family in the long run.

SUPPORT

If other relatives are on location and doing the diligent work of everyday care giving, be sure to check in as much as possible to let them vent and know you're available to listen. This type of family support and encouragement costs you nothing, yet means a great deal. The role of a caretaker is emotionally and physically taxing. Discussing feelings as it relates to your role can relieve some stress and bring some peace of mind for the time being.

As a family-minded community, our team at StoneBridge understands the importance of being there for our residents and their families.

Memory Care Program at StoneBridge Senior Living

We take a lot of pride in our memory care program at StoneBridge, and go to great lengths to cultivate an atmosphere of compassion, respect, and dignity within our communities. Aside from our medical professionals and memory care experts, what sets us apart from so many others is our daily memory care programming.

We take time to thoughtfully schedule a full day of engaging activities for our residents within the memory care program. Ten hours of programming to be exact, a complete day filled with social interactions, meals, cognitive exercises, physical activities, and even one-on-one engagement. Our approach to memory care is unique because we try to take as much of a holistic approach to care as possible. We do have health professionals certified to administer necessary medication, but overall, we lean on alternative measures whenever possible.

For example, many residents within our memory care are still part of a generation of women who stayed at home and were homemakers during their lives. Allowing them to participate in a familiar activity such as baking, brings back skills they inherently remember. This type of activity lights up their faces and brightens up their whole day.

Our residents respond well to these daily planned activities and they love participating. Of course, there are good days and bad days for any resident who is suffering from memory loss or a specific condition like dementia or Alzheimer's. That's what makes our work so important to us. We're there for our residents and their families during the ups and downs of each and every day. We work hard to show them that they are part of our family at StoneBridge Senior Living. It's not just a job for us. It's our calling.

FAQs

To provide a better understanding of dementia and its effects, we're providing a list of some of the more common questions and answers:

WHAT IS DEMENTIA?

Dementia is a blanket term for various types of medical conditions which impair memory and the ability to think and reason.

IS ALL MEMORY LOSS DEMENTIA?

No. There are many other reasons why a person might find their memory altered, including stress, lack of sleep and certain medications.

IS ALL DEMENTIA ALZHEIMER'S?

No. Alzheimer's is one particular form of dementia, the most severe. There are several other types, each with their own signs and symptoms. Knowing which type of dementia you have can help you get the right treatment.

CAN AN ALZHEIMER'S DIAGNOSIS BE CONFIRMED 100% WHILE A PERSON IS ALIVE?

No. A number of diagnostic tests can point to whether or not a person has Alzheimer's disease, but otherwise, doctors can only get a definitive diagnosis through an autopsy and examination of the brain tissue.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS AFTER DIAGNOSIS?

The first is to learn all you can about your particular type of dementia. The second step is to tell those in your life who need to know and will support you in this new phase of your life. Your third step is to find out what treatments your doctor recommends and to follow through regularly. Next, ask your doctor what support is available for you and your family, especially if you have Alzheimer's. You might find local support groups, an adult day care center, and more. Finally, begin planning for the future now while you can.

AFTER A DIAGNOSIS, WHAT ARE SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER?

1. Your care, and in particular, who will make healthcare decisions if you are not able. A living will and power of attorney are essential.

2. Finances – who will administer your finances if you are not able to? Your will can also help you state who you would like to leave certain bequests to when you pass away.
3. Dependents – if you have any dependents, such as a child, grandchild, or beloved pets, provision would need to be made for them. In addition, you might decide to appoint a guardian for yourself to ensure continuity of care.
4. To learn more about the important paperwork to have in place, visit: <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/financial-legal-planning/legal-documents>

WHAT TREATMENTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR DEMENTIA?

Dementia treatments will vary depending on the diagnosis type. In most cases, treatment will involve medication to address troublesome symptoms. Lifestyle changes, such as adding exercise to your daily routine, may also be a recommended course of treatment. Studies have shown that exercise can slow cognitive decline, even in people with Alzheimer's.

Keep in mind that medication will likely have varying degrees of effectiveness as well as certain side effects, so it is important to discuss all of your options with your doctor/s as you work out a treatment plan.

WHAT STRATEGIES CAN HELP ME COPE WITH MEMORY LOSS?

There are several strategies that can help:

- Tagging cupboard doors with written labels, sticky notes or pictures can help in the kitchen. Use a similar system for your clothing drawers.
- Use a paper diary so you can write down all of your appointments.
- Get a special pill carrier for all your medications. One type allows you to lay out your medicine for a week at a time, with four compartments in each daily pill box. The small pill box can be removed from the larger unit and taken with you anywhere. If you are not sure you have taken your medicine, just refer to the box compartments.
- Have routines for taking off clothes and putting them in the laundry, create lists for shopping at the supermarket, and so on.

Understanding more about a dementia diagnosis can make it easier to deal with, whether it's for you or a loved one.

Memory Care at StoneBridge Senior Living

The services at StoneBridge Senior Living are provided by compassionate professionals who are experts in Memory Care. They are dedicated to helping each of our residents achieve and maintain the highest cognitive function possible. For our residents requiring Alzheimer's and dementia care, our primary focus is on successful cognitive and emotional aging to maintain quality of life.

We provide each resident with personalized care that embraces therapies from a wide variety of areas, including nutrition, stimulation, spirituality, relaxation, creative expression, exercise and medical management. This is all done within our StoneBridge community, which offers beautiful settings and conveniences that provide all the comforts of home. Based on individual lifestyle needs and options, we offer a variety of additional services and amenities for residents to enjoy.

For many, we become a second home for families with a loved one in Memory Care. When caring for residents dealing with dementia or Alzheimer's, we recognize the importance of our work and make every effort to provide the utmost level of care. If you or a family member have been diagnosed with dementia or Alzheimer's and have questions about next steps, please reach out to us. We're happy to discuss the memory care options we have available, and we're here to support you and your family however we can. Our family of memory care experts are ready to serve your family.



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