Dementia

A group of thinking and social symptoms that interferes with daily functioning.

Very common
More than 3 million US cases per year

- Treatment can help, but this condition can't be cured
- Chronic: can last for years or be lifelong
- Requires a medical diagnosis
- Lab tests or imaging often required

Not a specific disease, dementia is a group of conditions characterized by impairment of at least two brain functions, such as memory loss and judgment.

Symptoms include forgetfulness, limited social skills, and thinking abilities so impaired that it interferes with daily functioning.

Medications and therapies may help manage symptoms. Some causes are reversible.

Ages affected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>0-2</td>
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<td>3-5</td>
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<td>6-13</td>
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<td>41-60</td>
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<td>60+</td>
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Symptoms

Requires a medical diagnosis

Symptoms include forgetfulness, limited social skills, and thinking abilities so impaired that it interferes with daily functioning.
People may experience:

**Cognitive:** memory loss, mental decline, confusion in the evening hours, disorientation, inability to speak or understand language, making things up, mental confusion, or inability to recognize common things

**Behavioral:** irritability, personality changes, restlessness, lack of restraint, or wandering and getting lost

**Mood:** anxiety, loneliness, or mood swings

**Psychological:** depression, hallucination, or paranoia

**Muscular:** inability to combine muscle movements or unsteady walking

**Also common:** falling, jumbled speech, nervousness, or sleep disorder

**Treatments**

**Treatment depends on stage**

Medications and therapies may help manage symptoms. Some causes are reversible.

**Therapies**

- **Rehabilitation:** Retraining the brain's pathways to improve mental and physical functioning after an illness or injury. For example, after a blow to the head (concussion).
- **Occupational therapy:** Improves daily living and work skills of patients.

**Medications**

- **Cognition-enhancing medication:** Improves mental function, lowers blood pressure, and may balance mood.
  - Donepezil (Aricept)
  - Galantamine (Razadyne and Razadyne ER)
  - Memantine (Namenda, Namenda Titration Pak, and Namenda XR)
  - Rivastigmine

**Specialists**

- **Geriatrician:** Focuses on the health care of elderly people.
- **Clinical psychologist:** Treats mental disorders primarily with talk therapy.
- **Neurologist:** Treats nervous system disorders.
- **Psychiatrist:** Treats mental disorders primarily with medications.
- **Primary care provider (PCP):** Prevents, diagnoses, and treats diseases.

Consult a doctor for medical advice

Note: The information you see describes what usually happens with a medical condition, but doesn't apply to everyone. This information isn't medical advice, so make sure to contact a healthcare provider if you have a medical problem. If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor or an emergency number immediately.

**Sources:** Mayo Clinic and others. Learn more