

# Age-Related/ Dementia Information

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this training, staff will be able to:

- Define dementia and describe how it affects brain function and daily life.
- Distinguish between normal aging, mild cognitive impairment, and dementia.
- Identify early warning signs commonly associated with dementia.
- Describe person-centered care principles for supporting individuals with dementia.
- Demonstrate effective communication strategies for individuals experiencing cognitive changes.
- Recognize common behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia and how to respond.
- Identify safety risks associated with dementia and describe appropriate mitigation strategies.
- Understand that dementia is progressive and that support needs increase over time.

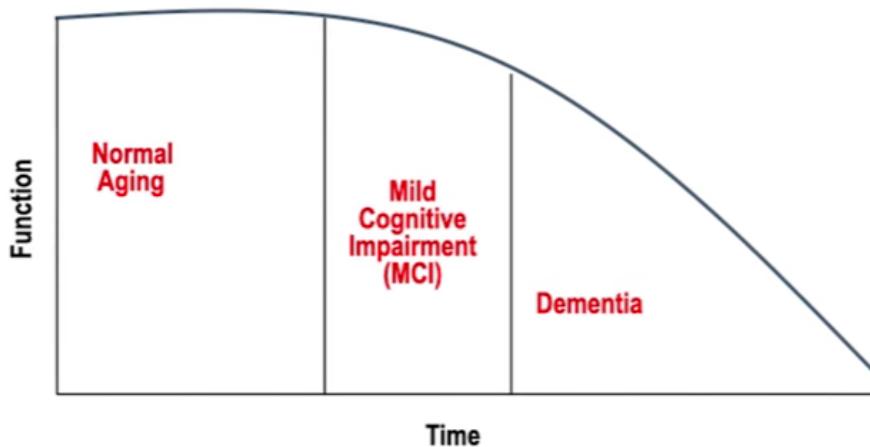
## What is Dementia?

- One of the most common conditions in older people, however, not a normal part of aging (it is how specific diseases/conditions process).
- Describes a set of symptoms that relate to the way our brain functions and how we think.
- Caused by damage to the brain cells.
- There is no cure.
- Medications can lessen symptoms and slow progression.



## Normal Aging -> Mild Cognitive Impairment -> Dementia

### Hypothetical Course of Cognitive Function in a Dementia Patient



#### Normal Aging

Predictable cognitive changes to occur in almost everyone (brains naturally shrink with aging):

- slowing of speech/language
- difficulty with complex attention
- memory changes
- decline in planning, organization and mental capabilities
- sensory changes (vision/hearing)

#### Mild Cognitive Impairment

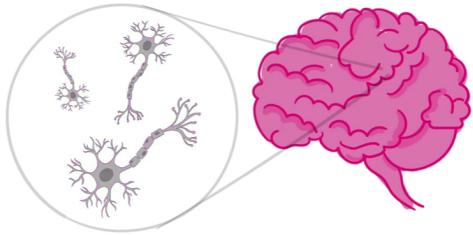
Memory changes start showing on paper (Dementia screening tools completed by medical professionals)

#### Dementia

Persistent and progressive cognitive decline that interferes with daily functioning:

- Aphasia – language/word finding
- Apraxia – using every day objects (television, computer, home appliances)
- Agnosia – inability to understand different sensation (pain and location)
- Impaired Executive Function – inability to multitask
- Visuospatial Deficit – spatial awareness
- Dupliccalulia – calculation abilities
- Emotional/Behavioural Changes
  - Apathy
  - Anxiety
  - Agitation
  - Depression
  - Psychosis

MANY CAUSES → LOSS OF NEURONS → SET OF SYMPTOMS



### SYMPTOMS

- SHORT TERM MEMORY
- CONCENTRATION & PLANNING
- MOOD, BEHAVIOUR & PERSONALITY
- CONFUSION
- LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION
- PERCEPTION



### Early Warning Signs

- Memory loss that impacts daily tasks
- Difficulty planning or problem-solving
- Getting lost or confusion with time/location
- Difficulty with familiar tasks
- Changes in judgment or mood
- Withdrawal from social activities

### TYPES OF DEMENTIA



# Support Strategies

Person-centered care focuses on respecting the person's dignity, values, preferences, and history. This approach aims to support autonomy, well-being, and meaningful engagement.

## Communication Strategies

Effective communication reduces distress and increases cooperation.

Helpful approaches can include:

- Speak slowly and clearly
- Use visual cues and gestures
- Maintain eye contact and reduce distractions
- Confirm understanding
- Validate feelings and redirect if needed

## Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms

Dementia can contribute to behavioural or psychological symptoms such as agitation, wandering, sleep disturbances, anxiety, irritability, or depression.

Support strategies can include:

- Identifying triggers
- Providing structure and routine
- Using redirection rather than confrontation
- Offering meaningful activities
- Ensuring comfort and pain management

## Safety Considerations

Common risk areas include falls, wandering, medication errors, kitchen hazards, and reduced ability to manage finances or technology.

Mitigation approaches:

- Environmental modifications
- Supervision and check-ins
- Support systems/groups
- Regular medical reviews
- Staying socially active
- Maintain regular routines

\*More supports will be needed as the disease progresses

