

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.

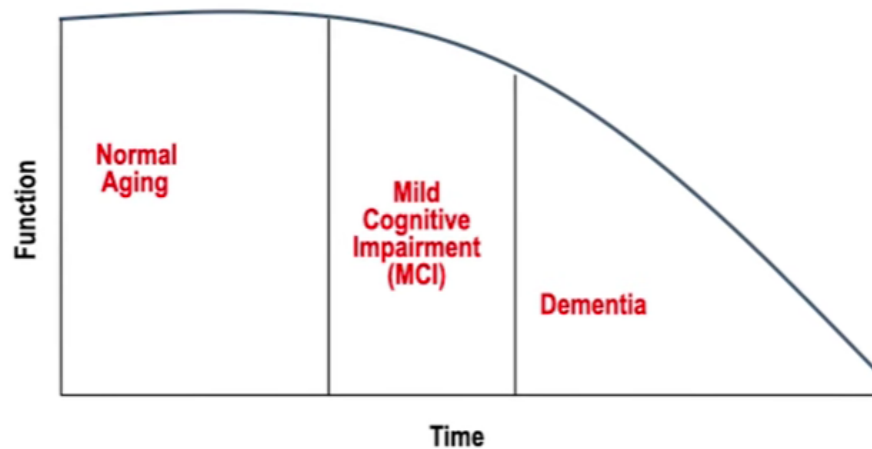
What is Dementia?

- 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

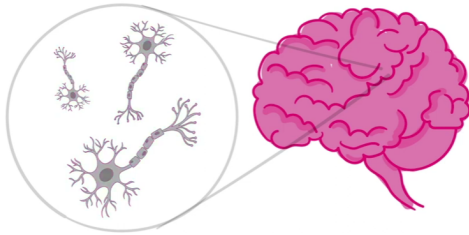
Memory changes start showing on paper (Dementia screening tools completed by medical professionals)

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
- Dupcalculia – 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

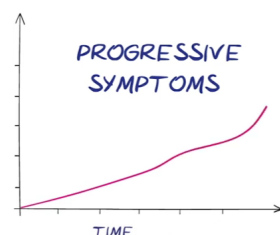
Common risk areas include falls, wandering, medication errors, kitchen hazards, and reduced ability to manage finances or technology.

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

SYMPTOMS



(BRAIN SCAN)

