



Dementia

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What is dementia?

Dementia is a gradual loss of mental abilities caused by damage to the brain's nerve cells and is not part of the normal aging process. People with dementia have trouble remembering things, learning new skills, making decisions and performing once-simple tasks such as cooking, banking and shopping. The most common cause of dementia is Alzheimer's disease (60-80% of cases), followed by vascular dementia (10-20% of cases). There are also a number of other, less common causes of dementia.

Why is it significant?

Dementia creates serious problems for both the person experiencing it and their loved ones. Eventually, many people with dementia can no longer live independently or make major decisions on their own.



What else should I be aware of?

As their condition worsens, a person with dementia may require round-the-clock help with their daily routine. You will likely have to decide whether to care for them yourself, get homecare support or move them into a nursing home. Dementia is usually late-onset and sporadic (non-inherited); therefore, a person who has a parent or a sibling with Alzheimer's disease has only a very slightly increased risk of getting the disease.

What can I do?

There are many things you can do to help ease the impact of dementia.



- ✓ Talk with your loved one about handling major decisions before their condition worsens. This may include creating a personal directive (living will) and naming a substitute decision-maker.
- ✓ Install handrails in bathrooms and along stairs to help prevent falls. Remove clutter, and adequately light hallways and staircases.
- ✓ Put a list of important numbers by the phone and post reminder notes where they can see them.
- ✓ Prepare meals for your loved one and store them in the fridge in microwaveable containers.
- ✓ Help keep your loved one socially, physically and mentally active by going places, exercising and playing games together.
- ✓ Focus on the abilities they still have. This will go a long way in adding to your loved one's quality of life and help them to maintain a sense of self.
- ✓ Contact the Alzheimer Society of Canada at www.alzheimer.ca or 1-800-616-8816.
- ✓ Learn more about dementia by going to www.makinghealthhappen.com.



Go to MakingHealthHappen.com and enter **uf4984** in the search box to learn more about Dementia.