

Understanding the (EARLY) Cognitive Signs and Symptoms of Dementia



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Importance of Recognising and Understanding Early Signs

- Can't not be overemphasised
- Enables respond early and appropriately
 - Seek professional advice
 - Early Diagnosis and Management
 - May help families cope better
- However, not easy to recognise... (Mary Mitchell O'Connor: On Alzheimer's Disease)
 - "...early signs don't arrive with a notification attached, so spouses of the sufferer go through phases of bafflement and irritation"
 - Electric kettle on gas ring
 - Sense of guilt

Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia

- Brain Disease → Dementia (Collection of Symptoms)
- Alzheimer's Disease → Dementia Alzheimer's Type
- Lewy Body Disease → Lewy Body Dementia
- Vascular Disease → Vascular Dementia
- Heart disease → Tightness in the chest

Early Cognitive Symptoms Dementia

- Early stages
 - Not global decline
 - Specific (isolated)
- Memory Problems earliest sign of Dementia?
 - Very often but not always, even when it is
 - It can affect different types of memory
- Depends
 - Type of disease and distribution



Forgetting: What is Normal?

- While losing memory and independence is the most common fear about growing old
- Some forms of forgetting are entirely normal
 - Don't jump to conclusions
 - Poor memory does not invariably leads dementia
- Remember that we all forget sometimes...
 - Mislay personal items
 - Get stuck for words or names
- However, it might reflect the early signs of brain disease and the process of dementia



Early Cognitive Signs and Symptoms

- Disoriented or confused about the day
- Forgetting what you read very quickly
- Repeating the same story or asking the same question without being aware
- Getting confused in familiar environments
- Difficulties learning new information
 - Operating new oven
 - Route to the Hotel while on holidays
- This is most likely NOT related to AGE
- Dispel the myth...

If in doubt...get it checked!

- Particularly if it interferes with your ability to function and your quality of life...
- Don't dismiss it...you wouldn't dismiss stiffness or pain... common physical symptoms of arthritis
- Seeking professional advice can be intimidating but...knowledge is power

Memory Clinics

- Ask your GP if referral warranted
- If due to brain disease
- Advise on how to ease the clinical manifestation of the disease
- Continuing to build cognitive reserve, exercise
- Adapting for independent living:
 - Habits and Compensatory strategies



1. MIRA, St James's Hospital, Dublin 8
2. St Patrick's University Hospital Memory Clinic, Dublin 9
3. Beaumont Hospital Memory Clinic, Dublin 9
4. Memory Works, Dublin City University, Dublin 9
5. St Joseph's Centre, Clonsilla, Dublin 15
6. Highfield Hospital, Co. Dublin
7. The Cognitive Clinic, Navan, Co. Meath
8. Intellectual Disability Mental Health Service, Roinstown, Co. Westmeath
9. Midland Regional Hospital Memory Clinic, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
10. Sacred Heart Hospital Memory Clinic, Carlow
11. Wexford General Hospital Memory Clinic, Co. Wexford
12. St Patrick's Hospital Memory Clinic, Cashel, Co. Tipperary
13. Old Age Psychiatry Memory Clinic, St Finbarr's Hospital, Cork City
14. Galway Memory Clinic, Galway

Positive News

- Not all **memory problems** arise from brain disease
- **Underlying Treatable or Reversible Condition**
 - Medication
 - Medical conditions
 - Underactive thyroid, vitamin deficiency, brain infection
 - Life style
 - Alcohol excess, fatigue
 - Psychological factors
 - Social isolation
 - Depression & Anxiety (cortisol)
- **Getting the right management can drastically improve memory and QoL**

So...

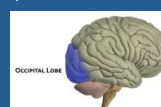
- Why is it sometimes so difficult for clinicians and the general public to identify dementia at the early stages

Why is it so difficult to Recognise?

- Deficits are very subtle
 - High functioning individuals
 - Screening tools to detect it may be insensitive
- Deficits are detected but other factors have to be considered (depression, effects of medication)
- Memory is not always the earliest cognitive sign...
- Not even in what may turn out to be Alzheimer's disease

Atypical Forms of Alzheimer's

- **Increasing recognition of atypical forms of AD**
 - Memory is not always the first sign of the disease
 - "I keep getting burned when I put the tray in the oven"
 - "When I hang up the clothes on the line I often miss it"
- **Posterior Cortical Atrophy – Spatial problems**
 - Reading a line of text
 - Judging distances (bumping into things)
 - Difficulties using very familiar tools (e.g. drill)
 - Inability to perceive more than one object at a time



Other Causes of Dementia

- Not all diseases present with memory or indeed any other major cognitive symptom
- Some are heralded by
 - Behavioural and personality alterations
- Frontal Variant-FTD
- Result from damage to neurons in the frontal part of the brain
- If we focus only on memory we will overlook the early signs of many types of diseases that can cause dementia



Ensuring we don't overlook the early Signs

- Clinicians continue to increase our knowledge of the different types of dementias and their earliest signs and symptoms
- General public has ready access to information that is credible, scientifically sound and easy to understand
- Health Promotion Initiatives in Ireland

THE ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF IRELAND

DEMENTIA & YOU ABOUT DEMENTIA LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

About Dementia

You may know it as:

- Information about Alzheimer's disease AND...
- Other types of dementia

Resources include:

- Worried about Dementia?
- What is dementia?
- Progression & stages
- Next Steps after Diagnosis
- Stay Active
- Socialise
- Brain exercise
- Build routines
- Eat Healthy
- Technology

NEIL 10 Educational Videos
www.freedemliving.com

Scientifically grounded information delivered in a fun and accessible manner with practical advice about brain health

Can your memory go completely?
 Learn about different types of memory and take comfort in knowing that it is simply not possible to lose your memory completely.
[Watch the video](#)

How does memory work?
 Find out how memories are made and what you can do to help your memory?
[Watch the video](#)

What can you do to keep your brain healthy?
 Find out how keeping active is important for brain health.
[Watch the video](#)

Hello Brain
www.hellobrain.eu



- Easy-to-understand information about THE brain and brain health
- Short online films
- Daily mental exercises to keep your brain healthy

Take the Hello Brain Challenge – do one thing every day that's good for your brain. Our Free App provides daily suggestions and support.

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

- Accessing credible information can be challenging
- Sources of information
- MyHealthApp



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Symptoms of Dementia

I sincerely hope this has helped

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