

Where can I go for support?

The following services can give support to you and your family:

Alzheimer Society of Durham Region

905-576-2567 or 1-888-301-1106

Individual support / support groups

Safely Home Wandering Registry

Education / Information

Resource lending library

Central East Community Care Access Centre

(CE CCAC)

905-430-3308 or 1-800-263-3877

Information and referral

Access to / coordination of:

Personal support / Nursing

Nutritional counselling / Social Work

Occupational / Physio / Speech therapies

Medical supplies and equipment

Adult day program

Long term care / short stay beds

Prepared by:

DEMENTIA NETWORK

D u r h a m

The Dementia Network of Durham Region brings together a wide variety of community members to address the broad issues of dementia and dementia care and to improve the coordinated systems of care for those affected by dementia.

Contact #: 905-576-2567

Memory Problems?

Confusion?

Dementia?

Know the Facts

DEMENTIA NETWORK

Durham

What is Dementia?

A lot of people experience memory lapses. Some memory problems are serious and others are not. People who have serious changes in their memory, personality and/or behaviour may have a brain condition called dementia. Dementia affects a person's ability to carry out their daily life activities.

The term dementia describes a group of symptoms that are caused by changes in brain function. Dementia is caused by many conditions, some can be reversed and others, as yet, cannot. Dementia symptoms may include:

- Asking the same questions repeatedly
- Becoming lost in familiar places
- Being unable to follow directions
- Getting disoriented about time
- Neglecting personal safety, hygiene and nutrition

Family's Role How can you help?

- Be well informed.
- Make appointments for the person.
- Help with transportation.
- Accompany the person to appointments.
- Have patience.
- Share information with others close to the person.
- Try to help establish a course of action.
- Take time to care for yourself.

Types of Dementia

Some of the diseases which cause dementia include:

Alzheimer's Disease (AD)

AD is the most common form of dementia. Changes in the brain occur gradually, and symptoms include: short term memory problems, changes in judgment or reasoning and the inability to perform familiar tasks.

Vascular Dementia (VaD)

VaD may be preventable, therefore early detection and diagnosis is important. Lack of circulation of blood through the brain causes damage to localized areas frequently associated with muscle weakness. This can cause changes in thinking and behaviour.

Lewy body Dementia (LBD)

LBD is a form of progressive dementia with symptoms similar to that of AD but with noticeable fluctuations from day to day in attention and ability to function. Persons may report what sounds to be a vivid imagination/hallucinations. Features can also resemble Parkinson's Disease (rigidity, tremors, stooped posture).

Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD)

In the early stages, FTD primarily affects personality, behaviour and/or speech. Persons with FTD may behave impulsively and be difficult to redirect. Memory and orientation remain relatively intact. Pick's disease is one type of FTD.

Ten Early Signs of Dementia

Common signs of dementia are listed below. Not everyone who has dementia will have all of these signs:

- Poor or decreased judgment.
- Abstract thinking is a problem (e.g., calculations, planning ahead)
- Misplacing things.
- Changes in mood.
- Personality changes.
- Loss of stamina, interest, initiative.
- Memory loss that affects daily life activities.
- Difficulty performing familiar tasks.
- Problems with finding words and understanding speech.
- Disorientation to time and place.

Did You Know?

Myth: Dementia is a normal part of aging.

Fact: Dementia is not a normal part of aging. While age is an important risk factor for many forms of dementia, in fact, as many as 67% of people over age 85 do not develop dementia. Some forms of dementia (e.g. Pick's disease) occur between ages 40 and 65.

What Else Could It Be?

Other conditions that can cause changes in memory, thinking and reasoning include:

- Infection
- Drug interactions
- Heart disease
- Thyroid disease
- Diabetes
- Depression
- Alcohol/drug abuse
- Poor nutrition or dehydration
- Lung disease

Did You Know?

Myth: If you are diagnosed with dementia, nothing can be done about it.

Fact: Although there is no cure for most causes of dementia, there are medications and approaches that can successfully help with some of the symptoms and improve quality of life for some people. Furthermore, a great deal of support, education and information is available.

Where Do I Start?

Get a diagnosis

Visit your family doctor

Your doctor may refer you to other services/health professionals to help make the diagnosis.

These include:

- Memory Clinic (e.g., Whitby Mental Health Centre)
- Neurologist
- Geriatrician
- Psychiatrist
- Psychologist

Why Get a Diagnosis?

- Reduce anxiety for the person and their family.
- Identification and treatment of reversible conditions i.e., drug interaction, infection.
- Early intervention to alleviate some symptoms.
- Better access to resources and information.
- More time to plan for the future.

Process of Reaching a Diagnosis

Medical History

Current and past health information from both the individual and family is critical.

Mental Status Exam

This part of the process tests the person's sense of time and place as well as the ability to remember, express oneself and do simple calculations. It may involve exercises such as recalling words and objects, drawing and spelling.

Physical exam

To help rule out other causes a physical exam will be done. The doctor will look for heart, lung, liver, kidney or thyroid problems that may be causing the symptoms. Other nervous system disorders will also be ruled out.

Laboratory tests

A number of tests including detailed bloodwork, x-ray, EEG or brain scan may be used to assist the doctor in making a diagnosis.

Questions to Ask My Doctor

- Which tests will be performed?
- What do these tests involve?
- How long will the tests take?
- How long before I get my results?
- Can I be referred to a specialist?
- What resources/supports are available in the community?