

# What is Dementia?

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Dementia is not a disease in itself. Dementia is a word used to describe a group of symptoms that occur when brain cells stop working properly.

The symptoms can affect how you think, remember and communicate. There are a number of different reasons for Dementia, however the most common are: Alzheimer's Disease, Vascular Dementia, Dementia with Lewy Bodies (DLB) and Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD). There are other less common causes and it is possible to have more than one of these reasons for Dementia at the same time.

**The next few pages highlight some common symptoms of different causes of Dementia.**

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## Common symptoms of Dementia

**Alzheimer's Disease** is the most common of the four reasons for Dementia noted above. Symptoms can include:

- Depression / anxiety and changes in mood
- Memory loss – particularly recent memory
- Difficulty finding the right words and / or handling money
- Difficulty in planning and tasks that require thinking about different stages
- Asking the same question over and over
- Being uncomfortable or confused.

There are some symptoms which are specific to **Vascular Dementia** which include:

- Symptoms developing quickly – although this is not always the case
- Sometimes stroke-like symptoms such as paralysis on one side or muscle weakness.

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## Common symptoms of Dementia

There are some symptoms which are specific to Dementia with **Lewy's Bodies** which include:

- Fluctuating levels of confusion
- Fluctuating levels of tiredness
- Becoming physically slower.

There are some symptoms which are specific to **Frontotemporal Dementia** which include:

- Emotional changes towards others – E.G. appearing 'cold' and unfeeling
- Becoming tactless and less inhibited
- Not speaking, speaking less than usual and difficulty finding the right words.

## Useful contacts and links:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia-guide/Pages/dementia-choices.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia-guide/Pages/dementia-choices.aspx)

[www.dementiauk.org/understanding-dementia/about-dementia](http://www.dementiauk.org/understanding-dementia/about-dementia)

Age UK Advice Line - 0800 169 2081