8 Common Types of Dementia

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What Are the Different Types of Dementia?

Dementia is not one condition. It is a term that describes is a group of neurodegenerative symptoms occurring when brain cells stop working correctly. Dementia describes severe brain changes, and these changes make it difficult to perform daily activities and cause changes in personality and behavior. The changes happen inside specific parts of the brain, affecting the thinking process, memory and the ability to communicate. So, what are the different types of dementia? Let's get into it.

8 Types of Dementia

There are various conditions that can contribute to the development of dementia. The different types of dementia include Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, Parkinson's disease, Lewy Body dementia, Huntington's disease, frontotemporal dementia, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease and Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome.

1. Alzheimer’s Disease

Alzheimer’s disease is the most common form of dementia. Currently, more than 5.5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer’s. The condition is more common in in older adults, and 10% of adults over 65 have Alzheimer’s.

The early symptoms of this type of dementia include mood changes, forgetting names and recent events. As the brain cells start to die, a loved one with dementia may start to have trouble walking and talking.

Risk factors for Alzheimer’s include age, lifestyle, genetics and environmental factors. Family history is a strong risk factor, especially if you have a parent or sibling with the disease.

2. Vascular Dementia

According to the Alzheimer’s Association, vascular dementia is the second most common type of dementia. This condition is caused by the lack of blood flow to the brain.

Symptoms of vascular dementia can appear suddenly or gradually. They can be related to age or a cardiovascular event, such as a stroke.

Early signs of vascular dementia may include:

- Confusion.
- Disorientation.
- Trouble speaking or understanding.
- Vision changes.

More advanced symptoms include troubling completing tasks, concentrating for long periods, vision loss and hallucinations.

3. Parkinson's Disease

People with advanced Parkinson's eventually develop dementia. According to the Parkinson's Disease Foundation, more than 10 million people in the world are living with Parkinson's disease.

The earliest signs of Parkinson's are problems with reasoning and judgment. It involves difficulty understanding visual information or remembering how to do simple tasks.

Parkinson's disease may also cause:

- Irritability.
- Depression.
- Paranoia.
- Trouble speaking.
- Forgetfulness.
- Confusion.
- Tremors.

The causes of Parkinson's are unknown, but many researchers think genetics and environmental factors might be to blame.

4. Lewy Body Dementia

According to the Lewy Body Dementia Association, 1.4 million people in the U.S. live with Lewy Body Dementia (LBD). The symptoms of LBD may be mistaken for Alzheimer's or Parkinson's, which may mean too many people are underdiagnosed and many doctors are unfamiliar with this condition.

LBD is caused by protein deposits in the nerve cells that interrupt chemical brain messages and cause memory loss and confusion.

It may also cause symptoms of:

- Visual hallucinations.
- Sleep problems.
- Hand trembling.
- Weakness.
- Trouble walking.

5. Huntington's Disease

Huntington's disease (HD) is a genetic condition that causes dementia. The Huntington's Disease Society of America estimates that are at least 30,000 cases of HD in the U.S. and that there are another 200,000 people at risk for inheriting the condition.

HD can affect both adults and children. The condition causes a breakdown of the brain's nerve cells, which leads to dementia and other impaired functions.

Symptoms of HD may include:

- Impaired movements, including jerking and problems with walking and swallowing.
- Difficulty focusing.
- Impulse control problems.

- Struggle to speak clearly.
- An inability to learn new things.

6. Frontotemporal Dementia

The Association for Frontotemporal Degeneration reports that up to 60,000 Americans have frontotemporal dementia (FTD). FTD accounts for 10% to 20% of all cases of dementia and up to 60% of FTD cases are in people ages 45 to 64.

There are no known causes of FTD, but your risk is higher if you have a family history of dementia.

Early signs of FTD may include:

- Changes in personally and mood.
- Obsessive and repetitive behaviors.
- Unusual verbal, physical and sexual behaviors.
- Weight gain due to dramatic overeating.
- Language problems, including difficulty speaking or finding the right words.
- Forgetfulness.
- Antisocial behavior.

As FTD progress, it will take on mental ability and cause memory loss. A more advanced form of the disease may cause:

- Unsteadiness.
- Twitches.
- Muscle weakness.
- Difficulty swallowing.

7. Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) is a rare, degenerative and potentially fatal brain condition. According to the Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease Foundation, there are around 320 new cases every year.

The onset of for symptoms for CJD usually starts around age 60. Symptoms of this condition are similar to other forms of dementia. Early signs of CJD include failing memory, behavior changes, lack of coordination and visual troubles. As CJD progresses, there is a significant mental decline, along with involuntary movements weakness of extremities and blindness and coma may also occur.

The exact causes of CJD are unknown, but some researchers think a slow-moving virus causes CJD, while others believe there is a genetic mutation related to this disease.

8. Wernicke-Korsakoff Syndrome

Wernicke encephalopathy and Korsakoff syndrome are two different conditions, but they often come together. The two conditions are a result of brain damage due to severe levels of vitamin B1 deficiency.

Wernicke-Korsakoff Syndrome is classified as dementia even though it is technically not a form of dementia. It occurs as a result of untreated Wernicke’s disease where Korsakoff syndrome starts to appear.

Symptoms of Wernicke encephalopathy may include:

- Confusion and loss of brain activity that may progress to coma and death.
- Loss of muscle coordination and leg tremors.
- Visual changes, including abnormal eye movements.

Symptoms of Korsakoff include troubles with processing new information, learning new skills and remembering things.

Outlook for Dementia Patients

The symptoms of dementia may progress based on the condition. If you think you or a loved one may be experiencing early symptoms of dementia, you should talk to your doctor right away.

While there is no cure for Alzheimer’s and other conditions causing dementia, an early diagnosis can help patients receive all possible treatment options and manage symptoms for as long as possible.