



What Are Common Types of Dementia?

If you or a loved one occasionally have trouble recalling recent events, misplace everyday items, or temporarily forget names or words, it's typically not a cause for concern. These lapses could be part of the normal aging process.

However, dementia — more seriously impaired thinking, memory, and problem-solving that interferes with daily living — is not a part of normal aging.

“Dementia” is the catch-all term for an irreversibly impaired and progressively worsening ability to think, remember, or problem-solve that affects an older adult's ability to perform normal activities. It is not a single disease but instead a condition that can be caused by multiple different diseases:

Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease accounts for 60-80 percent of all dementia cases. Alzheimer's worsens over time, and typically causes memory loss, problems with language, and erratic or unpredictable behavior. Some people with Alzheimer's disease also experience changes in their mood and may become confused and frightened or angry and violent.

Vascular Disease

Vascular dementia occurs when blood vessels supplying oxygen to the brain are damaged. The damage can be gradual and progress over time because of numerous narrowed blood vessels, small blockages, or bleeds in the brain. Or it can have sudden onset following vascular brain injuries such as stroke.

Unlike Alzheimer's disease, memory loss is not typically a

pronounced symptom. Instead, common symptoms of vascular dementia include sluggish thinking, trouble solving problems or making decisions, unsteady gait, and difficulty concentrating.

Lewy Body Dementia

Lewy Body Dementia (LBD) is another common cause of progressive dementia. It is more common in men than women, can have a sudden onset, and may progress very quickly. Symptoms include impaired thinking and memory, difficulty remaining alert or maintaining attention, stiffness and slowness of movement, visual hallucinations, and changes to sleep and behavior.

LBD can also cause bodily systems to become dysregulated, which may lead to circulatory or digestive problems such as changes to blood pressure, dizziness, and constipation.

Mixed Dementia

Some people with dementia can have two or more underlying diseases, such as vascular dementia and Alzheimer's disease, that contribute to their symptoms.

Dementia Care for Seniors

Dementia can be caused by multiple diseases, so getting the right medical diagnosis is critical. Speak to your loved one's doctor if you notice any symptoms — especially if your senior has any risk factors for dementia, such as:

- Family History
- Poor Diet
- Nutritional Deficiencies
- Sedentary Lifestyle
- Smoking or Alcohol Use
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Sleep Apnea

Although dementia is incurable, there are treatments that can improve your loved one's quality of life and help control symptoms.

If you need additional support for someone with dementia, consider a Visiting Angels caregiver. Our care coordinators are available to discuss your loved one's needs during a free home care consultation.



Why Vitamin D is Important for Seniors

You've probably heard that vitamin D is important for staying healthy. But has anyone explained why?

Vitamin D is an essential nutrient that absorbs calcium in the body and promotes bone growth. It also plays a vital role in maintaining the health of teeth, muscles, and the immune system. Vitamin D is sometimes called the "sunshine vitamin," because it's produced naturally in the body from direct sunlight exposure.

Unfortunately, many elderly people, especially those who are homebound, are susceptible to "vitamin D deficiency" if they are stuck indoors and don't spend enough quality time outside under the sun.

Effects of Vitamin D Deficiency in Seniors

Seniors who have a deficiency in vitamin D can experience issues, including:

Weak Muscles and Fragile Bones

Weak muscles and fragile bones – also known as osteoporosis – can make injuries and fractures from accidental falls more likely and potentially more severe.

Weakened Immune System

A weakened immune system can make older adults more susceptible to common infections such as urinary tract infections (UTIs), the flu, or even COVID-19.

Cognitive Impairment and Depression

Vitamin D plays a role in maintaining an elderly person's ability to regulate emotions and think clearly. Low levels of vitamin D are associated with an impaired ability to think and increased symptoms of depression in the elderly.

Increased Risk of Non-Infectious Disease

Vitamin D deficiency in older adults can increase the risk for certain non-infectious diseases, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and even some types of cancer.

How Seniors Can Increase Their Vitamin D Levels

Here are four ways seniors can increase their vitamin D levels to stay healthy:

Get Some Sunlight

Sunlight is the primary way a person produces vitamin D. According to the Cleveland Clinic, about 15 to 20 minutes of sun on the arms and legs a few times a week is usually sufficient. A stroll in the neighborhood or at a park on a sunny day can provide seniors with many benefits, both physically and emotionally. While sunshine exposure can help increase vitamin D production, it's critical seniors (or their caregivers) monitor potential skin burn. Excessive time in the sun can be associated with certain diseases, such as skin cancer.

Sun Lamps

Sun lamps can be a good alternative for seniors living in colder climates where the sun is not strong enough in the winter. Sun lamps may also help regulate sleep and reduce symptoms of seasonal depression. Only sun lamps that produce UVB light can help with vitamin D production, so speak with your loved one's doctor about the risks and benefits before using these devices.

Eat Well

Make sure the food and beverages your senior loved ones consume contain vitamin D. Although vitamin D is not found in many foods naturally, some sources include: cod liver oil, salmon, mackerel, tuna, beef liver, cheese and egg yolks. Many other foods and drinks are also fortified with vitamin D, including milk, breakfast cereals, and fruit juices.

Dietary Supplements

Dietary supplements can help people with vitamin D deficiency reach a healthy level. Research shows older adults who take these supplements are significantly less likely to develop health conditions associated with vitamin D deficiency. However, make sure your loved one takes the correct amount. Speak to your loved one's doctor and get advice on the correct dose before taking any supplements.

Professional Caregivers Can Assist

The recommendations above can be a lot to manage for some older adults and their family members. A Visiting Angels caregiver can help your older loved one follow their physician's suggestions to boost vitamin D levels by:

- Stocking the refrigerator and pantry with vitamin D rich foods
- Providing reminders about taking supplementary medications
- Encouraging outdoor activities while preventing overexposure to the sun

If you're interested in more information about how in-home care can help a loved one, contact your nearest Visiting Angels office today at 800-365-4189.