

The Caregiver Toolbox Dementia Series: *What Do We Mean By Dementia?*

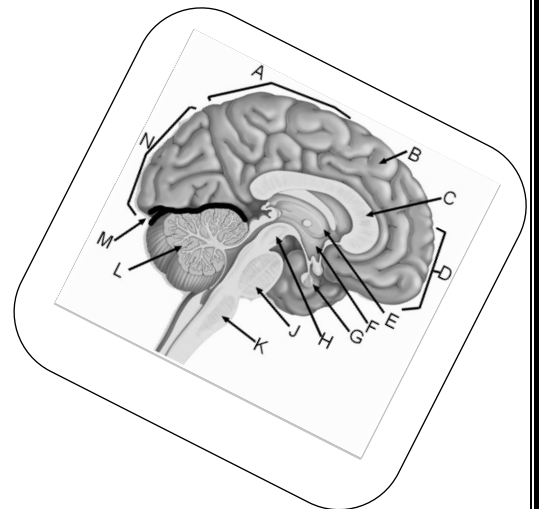
Typical Age Related Brain Changes

1. Short term memory challenges--details, names get harder to remember or recall immediately.
2. We have more information in our memories & it may take longer to retrieve information.
3. Often we remember what we forget and are troubled by it.

THIS IS *NOT* DEMENTIA.

Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)

- Problems with short term memory, language, other cognitive functions(left temporal region)
- People still generally function independently.
- MAY OR MAY NOT DEVELOP INTO A PROGRESSIVE PROCESS like dementia!
- Estimated to effect about 15% of people between age 60-90.
- SAGE test from OSU is available for screening(www.osu.edu)
- Medications seem to be very effective and should be started if MCI is suspected/diagnosed.

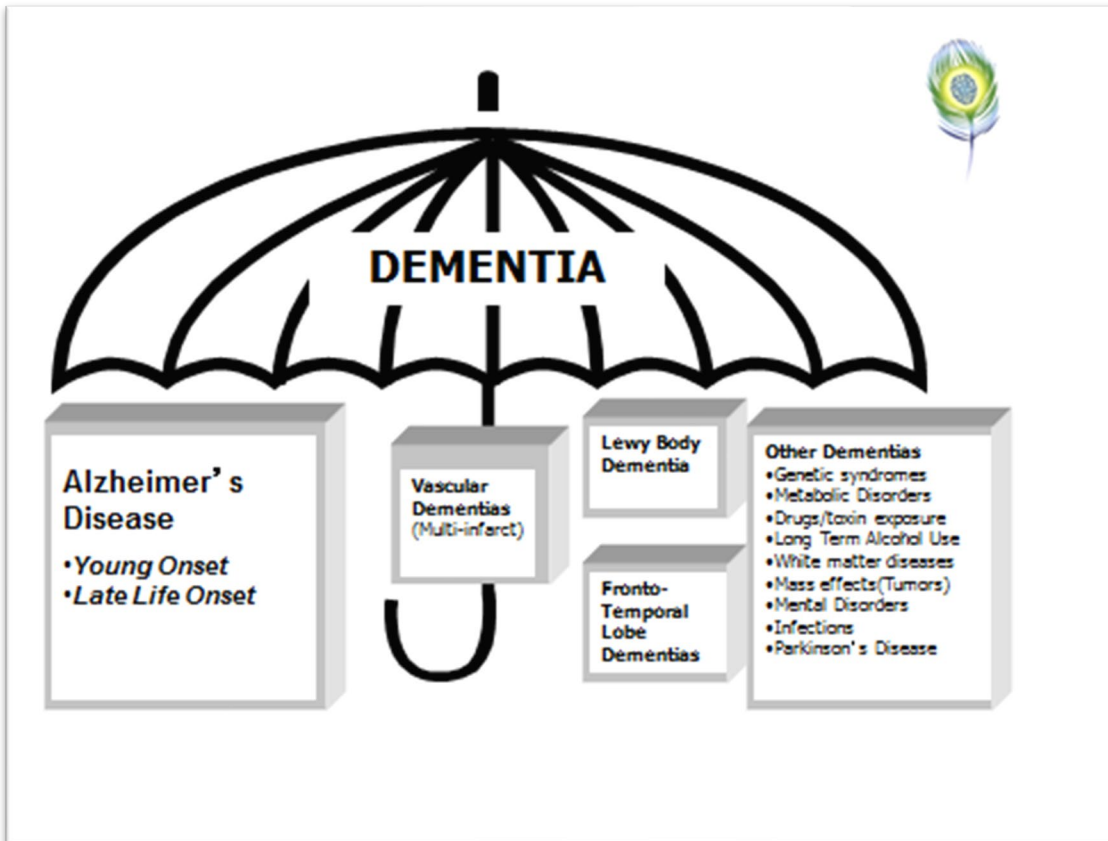


Dementia: What is It?

- Dementia Equals BRAIN FAILURE—the person’s brain is dying—not just memory
- Dementia is a *SET OF SYMPTOMS* NOT a diagnosis.
- Onset is typically *SLOW*.
- Can be caused by factors which are:
 - Reversible(Metabolic Disorders)
 - Treatable(Hydrocephalus)
 - Irreversible(Alzheimer’s Disease)
- Dementia is BOTH
 - *Chemical* changes in the brain
 - AND
 - *Structural* changes in the brain
- It changes everything over time
- It is NOT something a person can control
- It is NOT the same for every person
- It is NOT a traditional mental illness; people with dementia can have mental illness diagnoses too...
- It is real
- It is very hard at times

Some Resources on Dementia

- Teepa Snow’s Positive Approach to Care Website and Materials (www.teepasnow.com)
Understanding the Changing Brain, 2021
- *Mayo Clinic on Alzheimer’s Disease and other Dementias*, Jonathan Graff-Radford and Angela Lunde, 2021.
- *Creating Moments of Joy*, Jolene Brackey, 2017
- Website of International Alzheimer’s Assn. (www.alz.org)



Alzheimer's Disease - is the most common type of dementia caused by damage to nerves in the brain and their eventual death. It has an expected progression of about 8-12 years will get worse over time. It is a terminal disease - There is NO known cure at this time.

Vascular Dementia (Multi-Infarct) - is caused by damage to the blood supply to the nerves in the brain. It is spotty and not predictable. The person's condition may not change much for long periods and then experience sudden changes in a short period of time.

Lewy Body Dementia – includes problems with movement, falls & stiffness. Includes visual hallucinations & nightmares as well as fluctuations in performance from day to day.

Frontal-Temporal Dementias – Deterioration starts in the frontal region of the brain. Includes poor impulse control and difficulty with word finding The person often has rapid changes in feelings and behaviors.

Understanding the Three D's

- Dementia(progressive, some symptoms are treatable)
- Delirium(Short Term, Quick onset, Physical Cause)
- Depression(Mood Disorder, Symptoms are Treatable)
- Can and do co-exist at times
- Can and often do mimic each other

Pay Attention To!!

- Sensory Impairments?
- Language Impairment or Language of Origin?
- Significant Existing Psychiatric Diagnoses?
- Recent Transfer of Living Situation or Disruption in Day to Day Events?

Suggestions for Interacting More Successfully

- Don't correct errors, go with the flow of the conversation
- Be prepared to hear old stories over and over
- Use old pictures or props to bring up other old memories
- Find ways to laugh
- Do something with the person rather than just talking to them
- If the person says something distressing or seems worried about something, realize it may not be true, but they are not lying to you, their brain is lying to them.
- Remember the person is doing the best they can with the challenges they are facing in their brain!

This information is provided by: The National Family Caregiver Support Program



This is a nationally funded program operated in Central Ohio by the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging (COAAA). It offers caregiver workshops and funds services designed to assist caregivers on a short term basis. The services include: information and assistance, counseling, respite, and other supplemental services.

Request a copy or download our other guides:

- Central Ohio Older Adults Resource Guide
- The Caregiver Toolbox
- Central Ohio Long Term Care & Hospice Guide
- Central Ohio Housing & Home Repair Guide
- Central Ohio Private Homecare Guide
- Central Ohio Utility Guide
- Central Ohio Prescription Guide
- Central Ohio Transportation Guide
- Central Ohio Support Group Guide
- Central Ohio Respite Guide
- Central Ohio Moving & Transitions Guide
- Books, Videos, and Websites for Family Caregivers.
- Central Ohio Kinship Care Guide (New)
- Central Ohio Hiring Guide for In Home Caregivers
- Central Ohio Pet Care Guide

The COAAA also provides monthly Caregiver Support Groups & Information Sessions. For more information, call 1-800-589-7277 or visit www.coaaa.org.

Or in your county, call one of these agencies:

- **Delaware**-SourcePoint 740-363-6677
- **Fairfield**-Meals on Wheels Older of Fairfield County 740-681-5050
- **Fayette**-Community Action Commission of Fayette Co. 740-335-7282
- **Franklin**-Franklin Co. Office on Aging 614-525-6200
- **Licking**-Licking Co. Aging Program 740-345-0821 or 1-800-452-0097
- **Madison**-Madison Co. Senior Center 740-852-3001
- **Pickaway**-Pickaway County Senior Center 740-474-8831
- **Union**-Union County Senior Services 937-644-1010