

Ten Common Signs of Dementia*

1. Memory loss

S/He forgets things more often than usual – especially things that have happened most recently

Repeats things over and over again, sometimes in the same conversation

Has difficulty remembering how to do things they have done all of his or her life, like following a recipe or writing a letter.

Does not recognize well known people sometimes.

Forgets important recent events.

Does not know what his/her assets are, or where they are located.

Gets lost.

Makes up false information, without realizing it; e.g., remembers events that did not occur.

2. Familiar tasks become more difficult

S/He is less able to plan, problem solve, organize and think logically, than years ago.

Finds it increasingly difficult to perform routine tasks such as paying bills or dressing appropriately for the weather; late fees accrue; bills are not paid on time or go into default.

More driving or parking tickets than previously; or doesn't drive anymore.

Has problems with money and everyday arithmetic problems, usually or erratically.

3. Language becomes a problem

S/He substitutes the wrong words or forget simple terms for things.

His/her sentences can become difficult to understand sometimes.

Makes up words, uses language clumsily or sometimes stops talking to avoid mistakes.

Has trouble following or understanding a conversation erratically.

Has increasing difficulty understanding books, newspapers and other reading material

4. Disorientation of place and time

Sometimes or often becomes disoriented – even in familiar places, like his/her own neighborhood

Forgets what day, month or year it is, more than previously.

5. Poor judgment

Wears light clothing on a very cold day, or other obviously inappropriate clothing.

Does not realize when s/he has an injury or illness that requires a doctor's attention.

Gullibility and/or loss of insight into others' motives or feelings.

Impulse control problems, i.e., does things that are clearly socially inappropriate.

6. Problems with abstract thinking

S/He experiences problems with abstract thought such as looking forward to a future event.

Does not know what the numbers in the check book mean; cannot maintain a check register or explain what is in it.

Cannot understand bills that s/he previously would have understood sufficiently to act upon them.

7. Loses or misplaces items

Misplaces things, e.g. by placing them in strange places (e.g., putting a book in the fridge or keys in the sugar jar) – more than previously.

8. Behaviour and mood changes

S/He suffers mood swings with no apparent reason – so they may go from calm to anger to tears without knowing why.

Exhibits repetitive behavior.

Loss of empathy for others.

Paranoia.

9. Shifts in personality

Acts out of character.

Appears fearful for no apparent reason.

Becomes apathetic, confused or suspicious.

Withdraws from people and social situations.

10. Difficulty with initiative

S/He becomes very passive.

Requires prompting or cues to become involved in anything from social activities to housework.

Defers to others and becomes increasingly unable to make decisions.

Avoids change and has trouble concentrating and learning new things.

* = Drawn primarily from a checklist by Alzheimer's Australia

http://www.memoryloss.org.au/signs_and_symptoms/early_signs.aspx