

CHELFORD PRG

Chelford Surgery Patient Representative Group

Chairman: A. G. Biggs. Snapebrook, Chelford Road, Siddington. Cheshire. SK11 9LF

Information for patients about Dementia

First the good news, its not always Dementia !!

This is probably a disease that is self-diagnosed more than any other and only a qualified healthcare provider, such as, your GP, can provide you with an initial assessment and a pathway to care. In comparison, getting a diagnosis through an online assessment form may give you inaccurate, misleading information and put you at risk. Turning to the internet is not the answer to your concerns

There are many other conditions that cause dementia-like symptoms which can be halted or even reversed with treatment. Conditions such as stress, anxiety, depression, and delirium can cause serious memory problems that resemble dementia, as can the side effects of certain medications.

What is dementia?

Dementia is the loss of cognitive functioning – thinking, remembering, and reasoning.

This may happen in a way that it interferes with a person's daily life and activities. Some people with dementia struggle to control their emotions and their personalities may change. No two people experience dementia in the same way, and each will have unique symptoms.

Dementia is more common as we get older, but it is not a normal part of ageing. It is always important to consider what a person can do and monitor any changes that could signal dementia as this will help your GP with a diagnosis

Contact your GP

The overlap of symptoms of various dementias can make it difficult to get an accurate diagnosis. If you are concerned for a loved one or yourself, please do make an appointment to see your GP for that initial assessment. Prepare before the appointment to get the most from it- consider filling in the Alzheimer's society checklist before you attend.

[Symptoms Checklist.pdf \(alzheimers.org.uk\)](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/resources/checklists/symptoms-checklist)

Your GP will first assess whether there are any underlying treatable conditions that may relate to your cognitive difficulties. Other tests will be done to check bloods, hormones, and vitamins to rule out other causes of your symptoms. They can also do a cognitive test to assess your condition.

Once they have done this, they can refer you on for specialist assessment and support from community services.

The causes of dementia are currently unknown and cannot be 'cured' However obtaining an early diagnosis can help greatly with managing the condition, enjoying your life, and managing the pathway ahead.

Self-diagnosis can be very misleading and extremely frightening. We urge you to consult with your GP so that we may more accurately ensure that you are treated for the correct condition.

What causes dementia?

There are over 200 types of dementia including the most well-known one Alzheimers. All of these are different dementias and can present themselves in varying ways and, while we see commonalities in different types of dementia, the underlying causes are still unknown. There is no proven prevention but leading a healthy lifestyle will reduce the risk factors associated with these various diseases.

The 5 most common forms of dementia in the UK are;

Alzheimer's disease

This is the most common disease amongst older adults and makes up around 60% of all diagnoses. It is caused by changes in the brain, including an abnormal build-up of proteins.

Vascular Dementia

This dementia is caused by problems in the blood supply to the brain or by the interrupted flow of blood caused by a stroke. Depriving the brain cells of oxygen and nutrients may then cause issues with concentration, thinking and carrying out everyday activities. Around 17% people with dementia receive this diagnosis.

Frontotemporal Dementia

A rare form of dementia that tends to occur in people between 45 – 65 yrs

It is also associated with abnormal forms of proteins and is difficult to diagnose. It's sometimes confused with depression, stress, and anxiety.

Eating habits may change and a person may choose to binge eat especially sweet foods.

Lewy Bodies Dementia

Lewy Bodies and Alzheimer's can cause problems with staying focused and finding it hard to make decisions. This coupled with memory loss can cause issues with how a person views the world around them. However, people living with Lewy Bodies may hallucinate or have problems staying fully awake as they find it difficult to sleep. Their ability to move may also be impaired.

Mixed Dementia

It is not uncommon for people with dementia to have more than one form. For example, many people have both Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia. It is understood by researchers who have conducted post mortem studies that most people aged 80 and older probably have mixed dementia caused by a combination of brain changes related to Alzheimer's and vascular related processes or loss of nerve cells called neurodegeneration.

Coping with Dementia

Should you or a loved one be given a diagnosis of Dementia, as well as the doctors there are many different agencies locally that can help you to better understand how to cope. Firstly, understanding what is happening and the possible paths of progression are helpful. Fear normally only comes from not knowing and we hope to be able to answer your concerns and help you to manage the condition. You are not alone, and we will do our very best to keep you aware of the various stages and hopefully how to alleviate the impact on your day to day life.

Websites to look at

The main websites to look with all forms of dementia are

www.alzheimers.org.uk

www.ageuk.org.uk

There are many others but be cautious - there is a lot of misinformation around