

# Dementia Awareness Month

September 2018

## What is dementia?

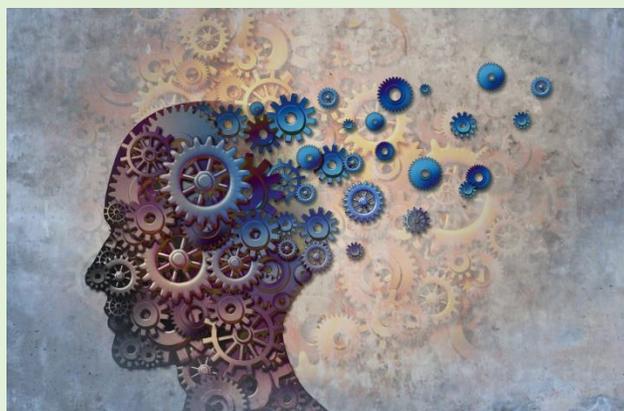
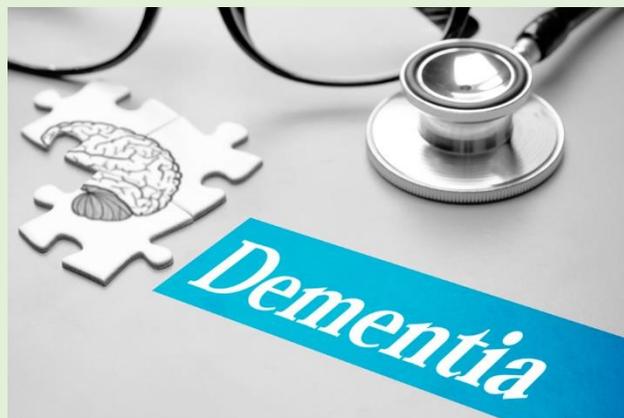
Dementia describes a collection of symptoms that are caused by disorders affecting the brain. It is not one specific disease.

Dementia affects thinking, behaviour and the ability to perform everyday tasks. Brain function is affected enough to interfere with the person's normal social or working life. The hallmark of dementia is the inability to carry out everyday activities as a consequence of diminished cognitive ability.

Doctors diagnose dementia if two or more cognitive functions are significantly impaired. The cognitive functions affected can include memory, language skills, understanding information, spatial skills, judgement and attention.

People with dementia may have difficulty solving problems and controlling their emotions. They may also experience personality changes. The exact symptoms experienced by a person with dementia depend on the areas of the brain that are damaged by the disease causing the dementia.

With many types of dementia, some of the nerve cells in the brain stop functioning, lose connections with other cells, and die. Dementia is usually progressive. This means that the disease gradually spreads through the brain and the person's symptoms get worse over time.



## Who gets dementia?

Dementia can happen to anybody, but the risk increases with age. Most people with dementia are older, but it is important to remember that most older people do not get dementia. It is not a normal part of ageing, but is caused by brain disease. Less commonly, people under the age of 65 years develop dementia and this is called 'younger onset dementia'.



There are a few very rare forms of inherited dementia, where a specific gene mutation is known to cause the disease. In most cases of dementia however, these genes are not involved, but people with a family history of dementia do have an increased risk..

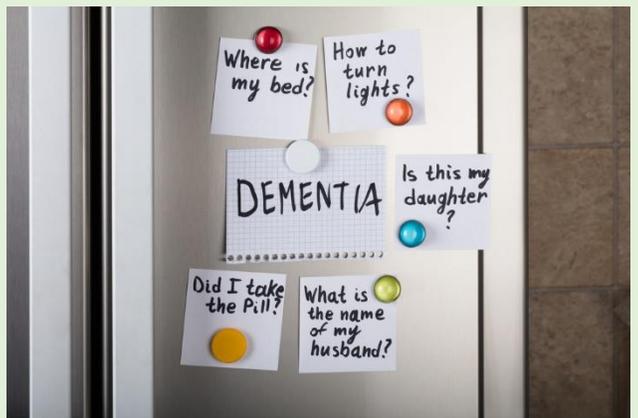
Certain health and lifestyle factors also appear to play a role in a person's risk of dementia. People with untreated vascular risk factors including high blood pressure have an increased risk, as do those who are less physically and mentally active. Detailed information about dementia risk factors is available at [www.yourbrainmatters.org.au](http://www.yourbrainmatters.org.au)



## What are the early signs of dementia?

The early signs of dementia can be very subtle, vague and may not be immediately obvious. Some common symptoms may include:

- Progressive and frequent memory loss
- Confusion
- Personality change
- Apathy and withdrawal
- Loss of ability to perform everyday tasks



## What can be done to help?

At present there is no cure for most forms of dementia. However, some medications have been found to reduce some symptoms. Support is vital for people with dementia and the help of families, friends and carers can make a positive difference to managing the condition.



## Dementia Awareness Month

Dementia Awareness Month is [Dementia Australia's](#) national awareness-raising campaign held every year throughout September.

Its aim is to encourage all Australians to become more aware of dementia, to get a better understanding of what it is like to live with dementia and how we can support people living with dementia.

Throughout Dementia Awareness Month, Dementia Australia will be highlighting the small actions people can take to create a big difference for people impacted by dementia, their families and carers.

## Dementia Friends

For Dementia Awareness Month 2018, communities are being encouraged to pledge their support by becoming a Dementia Friend and make a positive difference to the lives of people living with dementia, their carers and families, through increased awareness and support.



Through the Dementia Friends program, we want to transform the way we think, act and talk about dementia. Join thousands of others who have already signed up to become a Dementia Friend. Head to [www.dementiafriendly.org.au](http://www.dementiafriendly.org.au) and start making a difference today.

### Dementia Awareness Events

There are other ways people can get involved in Dementia Awareness Month, including a number of events happening across the country throughout the month.

The feature activity of Dementia Awareness Month is the Small actions Big difference Roadshow, featuring local Dementia Advocates, Dementia Australia Ambassadors and some of Australia's leading researchers. Head to [dementia.org.au](http://dementia.org.au) to find out more.



For more information, please contact:

Dementia Australia:  
<https://www.dementia.org.au/about-us>



Download Dementia Australia's [HELP SHEETS](#) to find out more about dementia.