**Care & Help, LLC. Home Care Agency**

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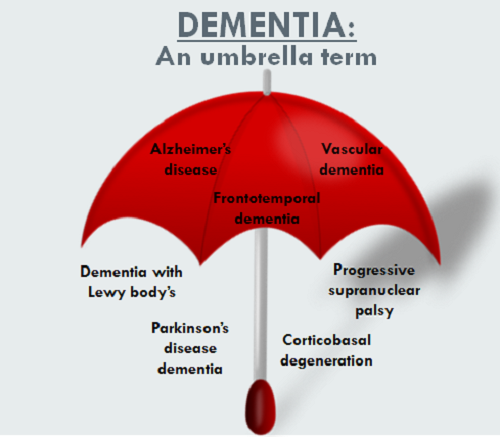
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**Dementia & Alzheimer’s Learning Guide**

Dementia

* Impairment of brain function (decline in intellectual functioning) that increases with routine daily activities
* Mental disorders caused by changes in the brain
* Patients with Dementia are confused and disoriented (confused to person, place, or time)
* Dementia is not a normal change of aging



Causes and Types of Dementia

* ***Reversible***: May be caused by vitamin deficiency, metal poisoning, or depression.
* ***Irreversible***: May sometimes be controlled by treatments or medication but not cured. Multi-infarct Dementia, Alzheimer’s disease
* Other illness or diseases that can cause Dementia: AIDS, brain injuries, tumors, infections

Alzheimer’s disease

* Alzheimer’s disease is a progressive nervous disorder that can overtime destroy all mental and physical function
* It is the most common cause of Dementia, affecting over 4 million Americans
* It affects both men and women of all racial, economic, and social groups

Causes of Alzheimer’s disease

* The cause of Alzheimer’s is not known
* Researchers have found that having a close relative with AD increases a person’s risk of developing the disease
* At age 80, a person has a 50% higher risk of developing AD
* A person with 1 parent having the disease has a 36% higher risk
* A person with 2 parents having the disease has a 54% higher risk

Environmental Factors

* Studies with identical twins show environment doesn’t play a part in developing Alzheimer’s disease- researchers do not understand why or how
* People who have suffered head injuries (with loss of consciousness) develop AD at 3x the rate of other adults
* Aluminum- researchers have discounted the ingestion of aluminum salts as a cause of AD.
* Virus- research is being done to see if AD is triggered by a hidden virus
* Studies also show that the following factors can affect a person’s risk of developing AD
* The geographic area where you live (Higher in Guam)
* Your mother’s age at your birth

Signs and symptoms

* Alzheimer’s disease has a gradual onset
* The first clue is a change in the person’s behavior
* Mild forgetfulness leads to problems finding:
  + the right word
  + Inability to recognize objects
  + Inability to use simple objects
* It may take months for the family to notice something is wrong
* Eventually friends, family, or co-workers start to notice things like:
  + Increasing and persistent forgetfulness
  + Mild personality changes
  + Minor disorientation
  + Frequently loses or misplaces familiar items
  + Has mild difficultly finding the right word
  + Has mild difficultly performing familiar tasks
  + Disorientation of time and place
  + Poor or decreased judgement
  + Loss of initiative
  + Difficulties performing arithmetic calculations

Diagnosis of Alzheimer’s

* Alzheimer’s disease is diagnosed by exclusion
* Medical history- the doctor gathers pertinent medical information (illness, operations, family history, nutritional and lifestyle information)
* Physical exam- the doctor performs a complete physical exam
* Neurological examination- the Dr. will order special tests such as a brain scan, EEG, or an MRI
* Psychological examination- the Dr. will refer the person to a Psychiatrist
* Laboratory tests- the doctors will have lab work done to eliminate other possible diseases
* Evidence of characteristics of Alzheimer’s disease- The doctor will look at the time frame for the confusion and behaviors of the person
* If everything else is ruled out, then the doctor will make the diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease
* The only positive diagnosis is made with microscopic examination of the brain tissue – This can only be done on autopsy

Stages of Alzheimer’s disease: Early Stage

* This stage can last for 2 to 4 years
* A person in this state may be aware of the diagnosis or know that something is wrong
* A person in the early stage may still be able to participate in decisions affecting their future
* Medications given for Alzheimer’s disease try to prolong the early stage of the disease rather than cure it
* Behavior associated with the early stage:
  + Mild forgetfulness (names, what has been said, recent events)
  + Difficulty processing new information
  + Learning new things
  + Following conversations
  + Problems with orientation
  + Becomes easily lost
  + Trouble following directions
  + Date and time
  + Communication
  + Finding the right words
  + Using proper grammar
  + Pronouncing words
  + Disinterest in grooming
  + Overreaction to stress
* Sundowner’s Syndrome:
  + Increase in problem behavior as the sun sets in the evening
  + May occur because the patient is tired at the end of the day or the person be may afraid of the dark
  + Plan activities for the early part of the day
* Hoarding
  + Person gathers items and hides them
  + They may forget where they put things and accuse another person of stealing them
  + If possible, have an extra pair of glasses or hearing aid
  + Distract the person from worrying about the item so they will not have a catastrophic reaction

Stages of Alzheimer’s disease: Middle Stage

* This stage may last from 2 to 10 year
* This is the stage where some people with AD become restless and pace or wander
* People in this stage may need help with many daily tasks- dressing, bathing, using the toilet
* Caregiver may have difficulty as care becomes more difficult
* Behavior associated with the middle stage:
  + Continued memory lapses
  + Forgetfulness about personal history
  + Inability to recognize friends and family
  + Confusion
  + Anxiety
  + Suspicions
  + Sadness/depression
  + Hostility
  + Decline in concentration abilities
  + Restlessness
  + Pacing
  + Wandering
  + Repetition
  + Delusions
  + Aggression
  + Assistance required for daily tasks
* If a patient is wandering:
  + Keep environment safe
  + Make sure patient gets enough exercise
  + Distract the person to another activity
* Delusions and Hallucinations
  + Delusions- a false belief
  + Hallucinations – sensing something that is not there
  + Avoid Direct confrontation
  + Do not agree that you see that hallucination or insist that it was unreal
  + Reassure the person that you are there to care for him/her
* Catastrophic reaction
  + Person over-reacts to a situation by becoming very agitated, angry, or emotional
  + Happens because the person has too much stimuli at one time
  + Try to prevent the person from having a reaction if possible
  + Keep environment simple
  + Do tasks in small steps
  + Stay calm yourself
  + Try to distract the person to another activity

Stages of Alzheimer’s disease: Late/End Stage

* This stage usually lasts from one to three years
* This person will need 24-hour a day care
* The person will eventually become bedridden and become incontinent
* Behavior associated with the late stage:
  + Loss of ability to remember, communicate, or function
  + Inability to process information
  + Severe disorientation about time, place and people
  + Withdrawal
  + Must use non-verbal methods to communicate
  + May respond to music or touch
  + Becomes bed-ridden
  + Loses ability to speak
  + Becomes incontinent
  + Inability to swallow
  + May become unresponsive (coma)
  + Ends in death