

General Dementia Facts

The difference between Alzheimer's disease and dementia

Dementia is a clinical syndrome that causes a decline in all areas of mental ability over time. It affects the parts of the brain involved with learning, memory, decision-making, and language cognitive abilities. Dementia also causes changes in personality, mood, and behavior. Alzheimer's disease is one form of dementia. It is the most common form of dementia. Between 60% and 70% of all people with dementia have Alzheimer's disease.

How to tell whether an elderly person has dementia or is just a little forgetful

A little forgetfulness is a normal part of aging. However, repeated and regular instances of confusion, memory loss, and becoming disoriented may be evidence of dementia. In this case, a doctor needs to make an assessment for a proper diagnosis.

Is it genetic?

The medical community acknowledges that family history is one of the risk factors in developing dementia. At this point, there is no conclusive evidence to say how much of a role family history plays in determining who develops dementia.

The age groups most susceptible to dementia

Dementia is most common in people over 65, but it can affect middle age adults as well. After age 65, the chance of developing dementia increases significantly as people age. Approximately 8% of people over 65 have some form of dementia, but once people reach 85 years of age the rate increases to 34.5%.

The cost to the health care system for taking care of people with dementia

The Alzheimer Society of Canada estimates the total cost of dementia in Canada in 2003 to be \$5.5 billion a year on persons with Alzheimer disease and related dementias. Based on current estimates, the potential total public and private costs for caring for dementia in BC by 2011 could be at least \$1.25 billion even before hospital costs are included. **This is \$22,727 per person with dementia, per year.**