

Learn about dementia: Symptoms, causes and diagnosis (Punjabi)

People from South Asian communities are at a greater risk of developing dementia.

In this film, you will find out the symptoms to look out for and what to do if you suspect you or someone close to you one has dementia.

What is dementia?

Dementia is an English term, there is no equivalent word in Punjabi. Dementia is a word used to describe a group of symptoms that includes:

- **memory loss** – such as quickly forgetting things that recently happened or repeating the same thing.
- **confusion** – such as getting lost in a familiar place, or losing track of the date.
- **needing help with daily tasks** – such as shopping, cooking or paying bills.
- **problems with language and understanding** – including often being unable to find the right word, or having trouble following a conversation.
- **changes in behaviour** – such as becoming unusually anxious or irritable.

What causes dementia?

Dementia is not a normal part of ageing. It is caused by diseases that damage the brain.

Dementia can affect a person's mental health, but it is not a mental health illness. It is a physical problem in the brain.

Different diseases affect the brain in different ways. The most common types that cause dementia are:

- Alzheimer's disease
- vascular dementia
- dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB)
- frontotemporal dementia (FTD).

The symptoms a person has depend on the type of dementia they have.

Some people have more than one type of dementia. This is called mixed dementia.

Who can get dementia?

A person's chances of developing dementia increases with age. However, dementia doesn't just affect older people. Over 40,000 people under 65 in the UK have dementia.

What should you do if you're worried?

If you have any concerns about changes you've noticed, you should contact your GP surgery. Any changes that aren't normal for you should be taken seriously. The problems may not seem big at first, but knowing what is causing the symptoms can help you get the support you need.

If you are concerned about someone close to you, encourage them to talk to their GP. You could start the conversation by gently asking if they have been feeling any different from usual. Support them to make the GP appointment and ask if they'd like you to go with them.

How is dementia diagnosed?

There isn't yet a simple test for dementia. It involves several tests to give healthcare professionals enough information to understand what is causing the symptoms. For most people, the process usually follows these steps.

1. At an appointment, the GP or another health professional will:
 - ask about any past or existing health problems
 - see if another condition is causing the symptoms, by taking blood samples, a urine sample and sometimes checking the heart
 - check for problems with memory or thinking things through.

If they think the symptoms might be caused by dementia, they will refer you to a local memory service, which has medical staff who specialise in dementia.

2. A specialist will carry out memory checks and ask different types of questions. There's no need to prepare for this. The specialist may also arrange for a scan to check for changes in the brain.
3. The specialist will say what they think is causing the symptoms. You will then be able to access the right support.

People sometimes worry that people will see them differently if they are diagnosed with dementia. Remember, it is your decision who you tell about any diagnosis you have, and when you tell them.

How can having a diagnosis help?

Being diagnosed with dementia can be scary. But once you or the person you're supporting has a diagnosis, you can start to learn how to live with dementia and plan ahead.

There is no cure for the diseases causing dementia yet, but there is lots of support available.

A diagnosis can give you access to:

- therapies and support groups
- medicines to help manage some symptoms
- protection from being treated unfairly at work because of the condition

- financial benefits
- information to help you live well with dementia
- information to help people understand what you're going through.

Many people with dementia are able to continue with the things they enjoy and keeping well and healthy will help you do this for longer.

It's important to remember that you are not alone. 900,000 people in the UK are living with dementia and there is support available for you.

Call our Dementia Connect helpline **on 0333 150 3456** for more information. Punjabi Translation service available to enable us to provide you with the right support.