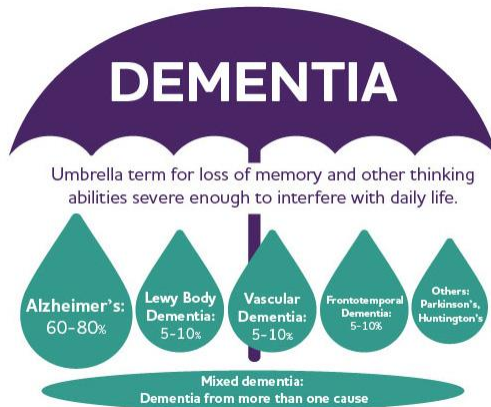




The 7 A's of Dementia

Understanding Changes in
the Brain to Support Your
Loved One



The long-term-care journey can be filled with challenges especially when one's daily life is impacted by dementia.

There are many resources available to support individuals and families on this journey. Perhaps one of the most useful resources is the Alzheimer's Society (www.alzheimers.ca) where they have developed a broad range of resources to answer your questions.

This brief brochure is a quick reference that we hope may support you in answering some "what is happening to my loved one?" questions.

The 7 A's of dementia help to illuminate some of the common changes in the brain that impact individual behaviours. They do not happen all at once and, in a manner of speaking, sneak up on us prompting questions about what is happening with loved ones.

We hope this quick reference will be a supportive tool for you!

The 7 A's of Dementia:

1. Anosognosia (no knowledge of illness): The individual has no insight into their illness and will deny that there is something wrong or argue that they do not need support/assistance.

2. Aphasia (loss of language): This describes someone who has difficulty with language and speech, including problems with reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

Most Commonly:

- *Expressive aphasia*: someone has difficulty communicating their thoughts and ideas.
- *Receptive aphasia*: someone has difficulty understanding things.

3. Agnosia (loss of recognition): With agnosia someone is unable to process sensory information, leading to an inability to recognise objects, people, smells, shapes, or sounds even though, for example, there is no damage to a person's hearing or sight.

For example, this may result in the incorrect use of an item such as a toothbrush being used to brush one's hair.

4. Apraxia (loss of purposeful movement): This is the inability to carry skilled movement, such as perform known tasks, even though the instruction has been understood and the person has the physical ability to do so. Examples include not being able to dress properly, or cannot eat (use fork or knife, places cup on plate rather than beside it)

5. Amnesia (loss of memory): Amnesia is a condition that results in memory loss or the inability to form new memories, and memory loss is a common symptom in some types of dementia.

People with dementia lose the ability to form new memories (short term memory capacity is damaged).

6. Altered Perception (loss of visual perception): Altered perception is the inability to interpret sensory information. For example, someone with dementia may suffer from problems with depth perception where they are unable to correctly judge the distance of an object to themselves which can result in bumps and falls.

7. Apathy (loss of initiation): The definition of apathy is a lack of interest, enthusiasm, or concern. There are many reasons why someone with dementia will suffer from apathy including problems in the brain's motivation pathways or a decreased function (for example an inability to initiate conversation or perform certain tasks).

For some individuals, all you need to do is support or cue them – invite them to participate in an activity or model what you would like them to do and they will follow your cue.