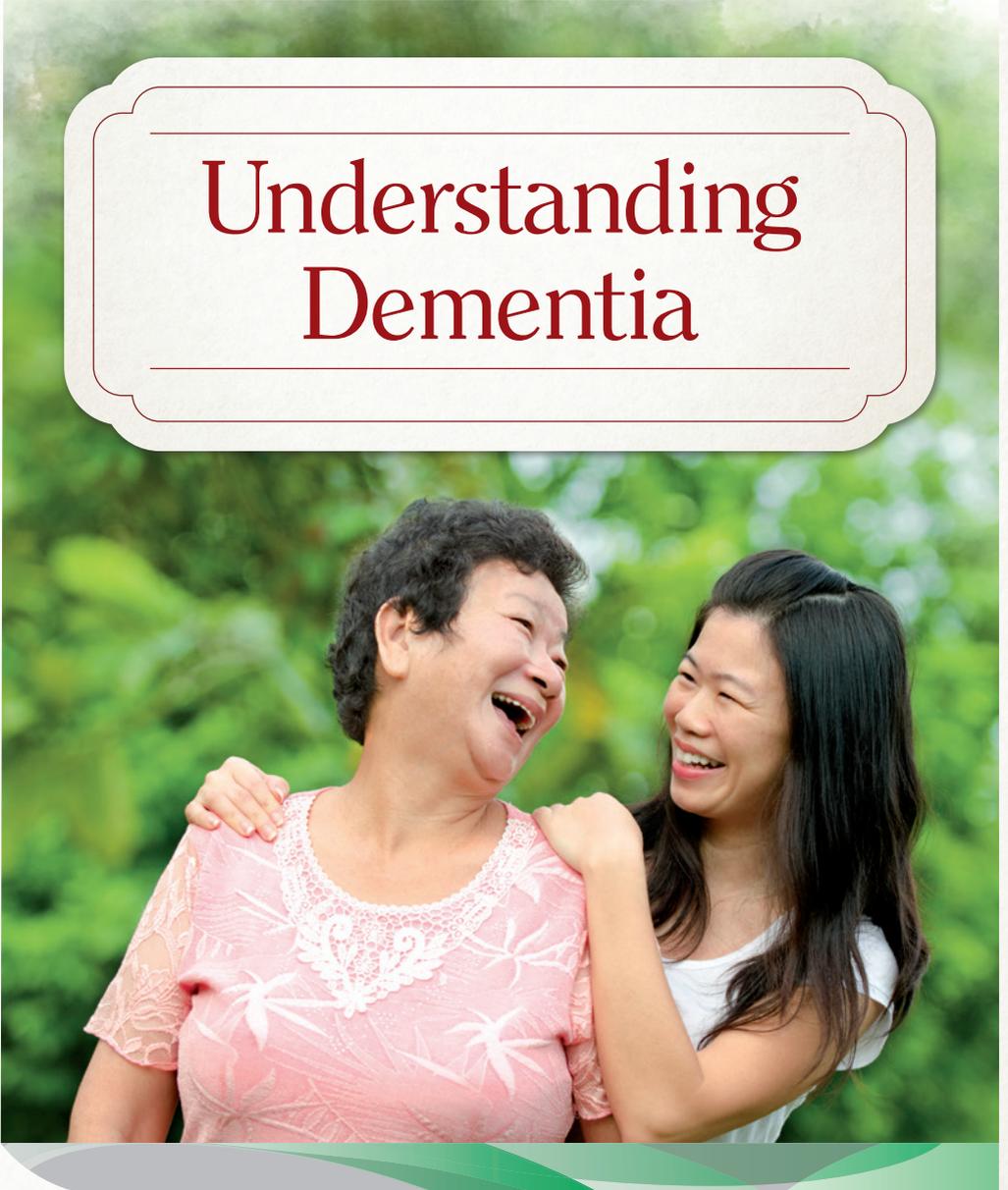


Understanding Dementia



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What is Dementia?

Dementia is NOT a normal part of ageing. Dementia is an illness that affects the brain, leading to progressive memory loss, decline in intellectual ability and personality changes.

It affects a person's ability to think, learn new information, solve problems and make decisions. Presently, there is no cure for dementia. However, treatment is available to manage the symptoms and slow down the progression of dementia.

Who Gets Dementia?

Dementia can happen to anyone, but the risk of dementia increases with age. It is more common over the age of 60.

Do You Know?

Currently one in ten people above the age of 60 are suffering from dementia.

Types of Dementia

There are various types of dementia of which the two most common types are:

Alzheimer's Disease

It is a progressive, degenerative illness that affects the brain, in which the nerve cells of the brain are destroyed and the brain substance shrinks.

The cause of Alzheimer's disease is not fully understood. However, genetic factors are known to contribute to the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, especially those of early onset (less than 60 years old).

Vascular Dementia

It is caused by a series of small strokes that cause problems of blood circulation to the brain. Unlike Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia is preventable.

The risk factors for vascular dementia include:

High Blood Pressure • High Blood Cholesterol • Diabetes • History of stroke • Obesity • Smoking

What are the Signs?

Knowing the signs of dementia allow for early management. Early detection and management help to relieve the symptoms and delay progression of the disease.

01 Forgetfulness of recent information

Persons with dementia may forget things, especially recently learned information such as what you have just told them. They may ask a question repeatedly because they forget that you have given them the answer.

02 Confusion of time and place

Persons with dementia may forget where they are and how they got there, and may have trouble finding their way to a familiar place such as the wet market. They may be confused about time of day and get morning, afternoon and night mixed up.

03 Poor or decreased judgement

Persons with dementia may show poor judgement such as by buying more food than they need, giving large amounts of money to strangers and placing their safety at risk such as inviting strangers into their home.

04 Difficulty doing familiar tasks

Persons with dementia may have difficulties handling money, cooking or managing routine chores. They may mix up the steps involved in doing the laundry, for example.

05 Difficulty with communication and understanding information

Persons with dementia may have trouble joining or following a conversation. They may have problems finding the right word for everyday objects like comb, and replace it with an unusual word or phrase, such as “the thing you use on your hair.”



06 Difficulty planning or solving problems

Persons with dementia may have problems developing and following a plan such as creating and using a grocery list, following a recipe or keeping track of monthly bills.

07 Misplacing things

Persons with dementia may misplace things and become unable to retrace their steps to find them. They may put things in unusual places such as placing the key in the refrigerator.

08 Withdrawal from work or social activities

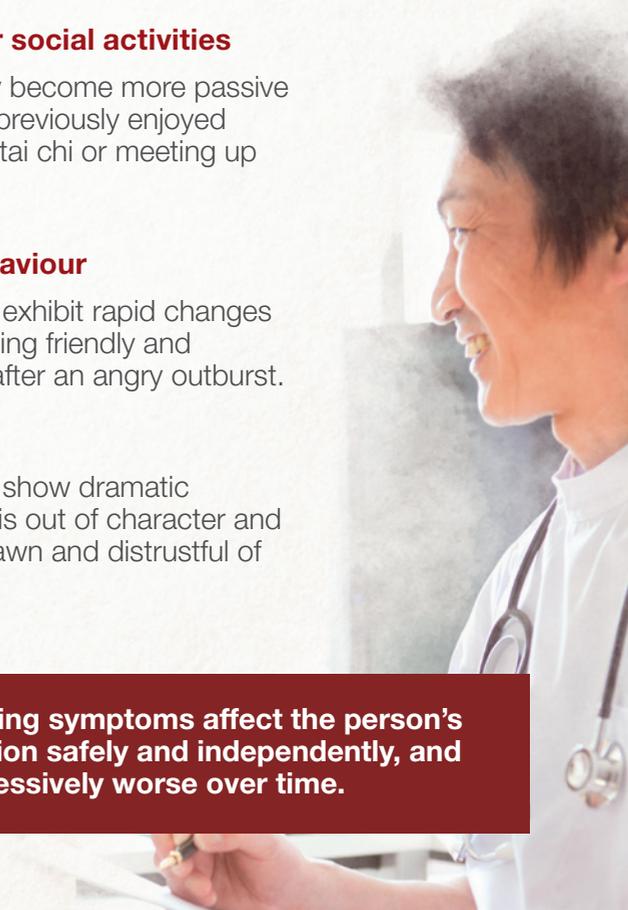
Persons with dementia may become more passive and tend to lose interest in previously enjoyed activities such as mahjong, tai chi or meeting up with friends.

09 Changes in mood or behaviour

Persons with dementia can exhibit rapid changes in emotions such as becoming friendly and affectionate a few minutes after an angry outburst.

10 Changes in personality

Persons with dementia can show dramatic changes in personality that is out of character and become suspicious, withdrawn and distrustful of family and friends.



In dementia, the recurring symptoms affect the person's ability to live and function safely and independently, and become progressively worse over time.

How to Reduce Risks of Developing Dementia?

01 **Build positive relationships**

Have frequent interactions with family members and friends. Volunteer or join a club to make more friends and participate in community activities.

02 **Stimulate your mind**

Challenge your brain. Read, write, play cards, crosswords or board games. Learn a language, a musical instrument or pick up a new skill. You can find a wide range of books and audio-visual resources at community libraries.

03 **Be physically active**

Physical activity improves blood circulation and supports growth of new brain cells. Get active through activities such as brisk walking, tai chi, dancing or swimming.

04 **Have a balanced diet**

Eat a healthy diet of more fruits and vegetables. Have less sugar and salt, and choose food low in fat (saturated fat) such as fish and soya.



Studies have shown that a healthy lifestyle can reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases and some types of dementia. Take these active steps and adopt a healthy lifestyle today.



05 Be heart healthy

Keeping your heart healthy keeps your brain healthy too. This prevents heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and stroke, which are also risk factors for dementia.

06 Manage your medical conditions well

Seek treatment and take medications dutifully to manage your medical conditions such as high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol or diabetes. Keep your blood pressure, blood cholesterol, sugar level and Body Mass Index (BMI) within the acceptable range. Go for regular medical check-ups or health screenings.

07 Reduce and avoid habits that harm your health

Limit your alcohol intake and quit smoking. Reduce your stress level with healthy habits. Exercise and have sufficient hours of sleep.

08 Take safety measures

Prevent head injuries and falls by taking safety measures. Keep your house clutter free, wear safety helmets when cycling and always belt up in car rides.



How to Care for People with Dementia?

Caring for someone with dementia can be an intensive and challenging experience as caregivers may face emotional distress such as anger and anxiety.

The caregiving process becomes more demanding when dementia progresses and the patient depends completely on the caregiver.

As the caregiver for a person with dementia, you need to know:

01

The progression of the disease so that you are better prepared to manage the patient's symptoms.

02

Be aware of your own needs and seek help from available support services to reduce your stress levels and increase your ability to cope. For more caregivers' self-care tips, go to www.aic.sg/caregiving

Take up a training course to learn how to care for your loved ones with dementia. You can also join a caregiver support group.

Lend Support to Caregivers of Dementia Patients

If you know of a friend or relative caring for a dementia patient, you can show them support in the following ways:

- Offer them a listening ear.
- Visit them and show that you care for them.
- Organise a picnic or other activities that gives them a break from their usual routines.
- Offer to look after the dementia patient if the caregiver needs to run some urgent errands.
- Help them by doing grocery shopping for them.
- Share with them information on caring for a dementia patient.



Why An Accurate Diagnosis for Dementia is Important?

Just because the warning signs are present, it does not mean that someone has dementia. Some conditions such as depression, hormonal disorders, nutritional deficiencies and infection would exhibit similar symptoms.

If you suspect that you or someone you know has dementia, consult your family doctor for an assessment or referral to a specialist service at the hospital.

Call the following helplines for more information on dementia and the sources of help available.

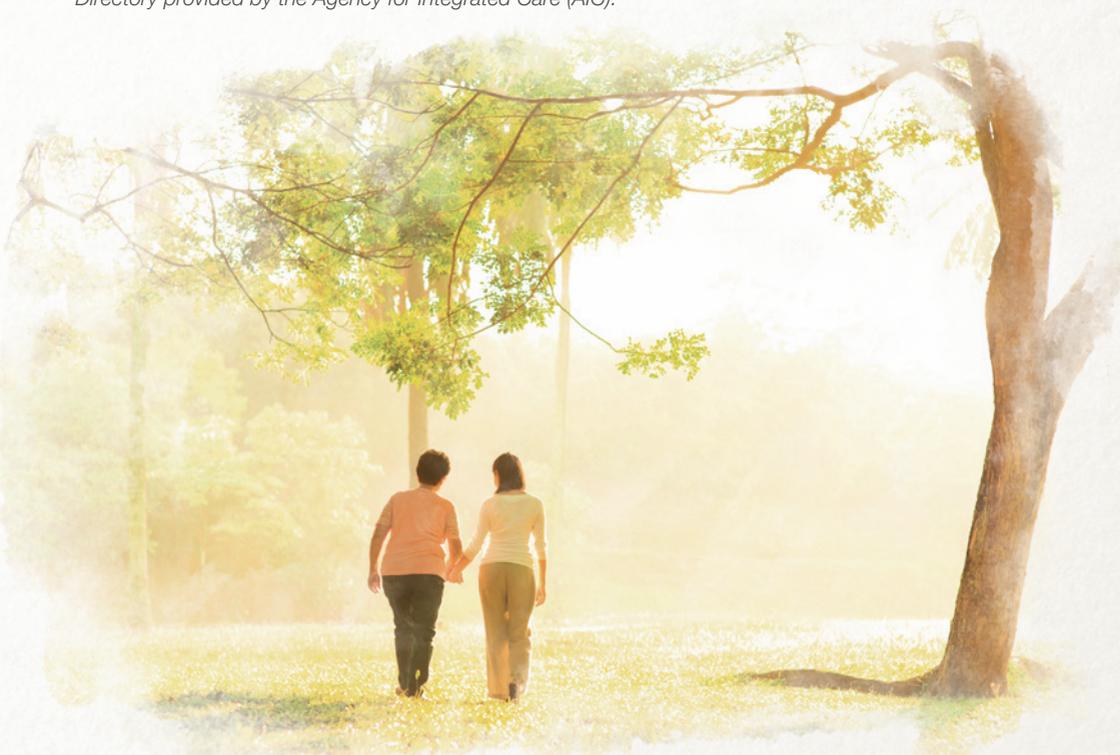
Dementia InfoLine:
1800 223 1123

Dementia Singapore's Helpline:
6377 0700

Please scan the QR code to find the full list of agencies providing information and support services on dementia.



Directory provided by the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC).





For more information on dementia, please visit
www.dementia.gov.sg

Dementia InfoLine:
1800 223 1123