



A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING  
**THE COMMON  
TYPES OF DEMENTIA**



**Oaks**  
SENIOR LIVING

When a family member or loved one is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia, it can be an emotional time. Not knowing how these circumstances will affect life as you know it and what to expect in the days to come can be overwhelming.



Fortunately, now that you have part of the answer to the many questions you may be asking, you can begin to take the next steps.

Getting a proper diagnosis is the first and crucial step in preparing yourself and your family members for the future. There are different types of dementia, so it is important to learn as much as you can about your loved one's specific condition and how it will affect them.

Oaks Senior Living offers compassionate memory care services to individuals and families throughout the state of Georgia. We want to share what you need to know about the common types of dementia, their causes, and common symptoms so you can get a better understanding of your family member's diagnosis and navigate care options.

## What is Dementia?

According to the Alzheimer's Association, "dementia is a general term for loss of memory and other mental abilities severe enough to interfere with daily life. It is caused by physical changes in the brain."

Dementia in itself is not a disease. Several different diseases may lead to dementia, and because it is a progressive condition, dementia and its symptoms progress over time. This makes it vital to understand what type of dementia your loved one has so you can work with their physician to figure out the best treatment and care plan.



## What Causes Dementia?

The Mayo Clinic states, "dementia is caused by damage to or loss of nerve cells and their connections in the brain. Depending on the area of the brain that's affected by the damage, dementia can affect people differently and cause different symptoms."

What leads to the loss of nerve cells and damaged neuronal connections in the brain still remains unclear. However, researchers have found risk factors that can increase an individual's chances of developing a form of dementia.

While some of these risk factors are out of a person's control, other risk factors can be managed, and steps can be taken to minimize the chances of dementia developing or progressing.



# Unmanageable

## RISK FACTORS

### Age

Increasing age is the greatest known risk factor for developing a type of dementia. In fact, “most individuals with the disease are 65 and older. After age 65, the risk of Alzheimer’s [or another form of dementia] doubles every five years. After age 85, the risk reaches nearly one-third (Alzheimer’s Association).”

### Family History

Family history also plays a significant role in a person’s risk of developing a type of dementia. If a member of your family has been diagnosed with the condition, you have a higher chance of developing it. The risk increases further if more than one family member develops a type of dementia, whether it is hereditary, environmental, or a combination of both.



# Controllable

## RISK FACTORS



### An Inactive Lifestyle

Exercise benefits not only our physical health but our mental health. Those who lead an inactive lifestyle are generally at a greater risk of developing dementia.

### An Unhealthy Diet

The Mayo Clinic reports, “while no specific diet is known to reduce dementia risk, research indicates a greater incidence of dementia in people who eat an unhealthy diet compared with those who follow a Mediterranean-style diet rich in produce, whole grains, nuts, and seeds.”

### Cardiovascular Risk Factors

Conditions such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol have been shown to increase the risk of dementia. By lowering these blood pressure and cholesterol levels through a healthy diet and exercise, individuals may be able to reduce their risk of developing a form of dementia.



# What are the common types OF DEMENTIA?



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## Alzheimer's Disease

As the most common type of dementia, “experts think between 60% to 80% of people with dementia have this disease (WebMD).” Individuals with Alzheimer’s disease have plaques, clumps of the beta-amyloid protein, and tangles, fibrous tangles of the tau protein, in their brains. When these plaques and tangles form in the brain, they damage healthy neurons and their connections, leading to common Alzheimer’s disease symptoms.

While Alzheimer’s disease and the other types of dementia affect each person differently, common symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease include:

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Memory loss

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Poor judgment

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Loss of initiative & spontaneity

Taking longer to complete everyday tasks

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Wandering or getting lost in familiar places

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Mood & personality changes

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Difficulty with language (reading, writing & speaking)

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Shortened attention span

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Confusion about time

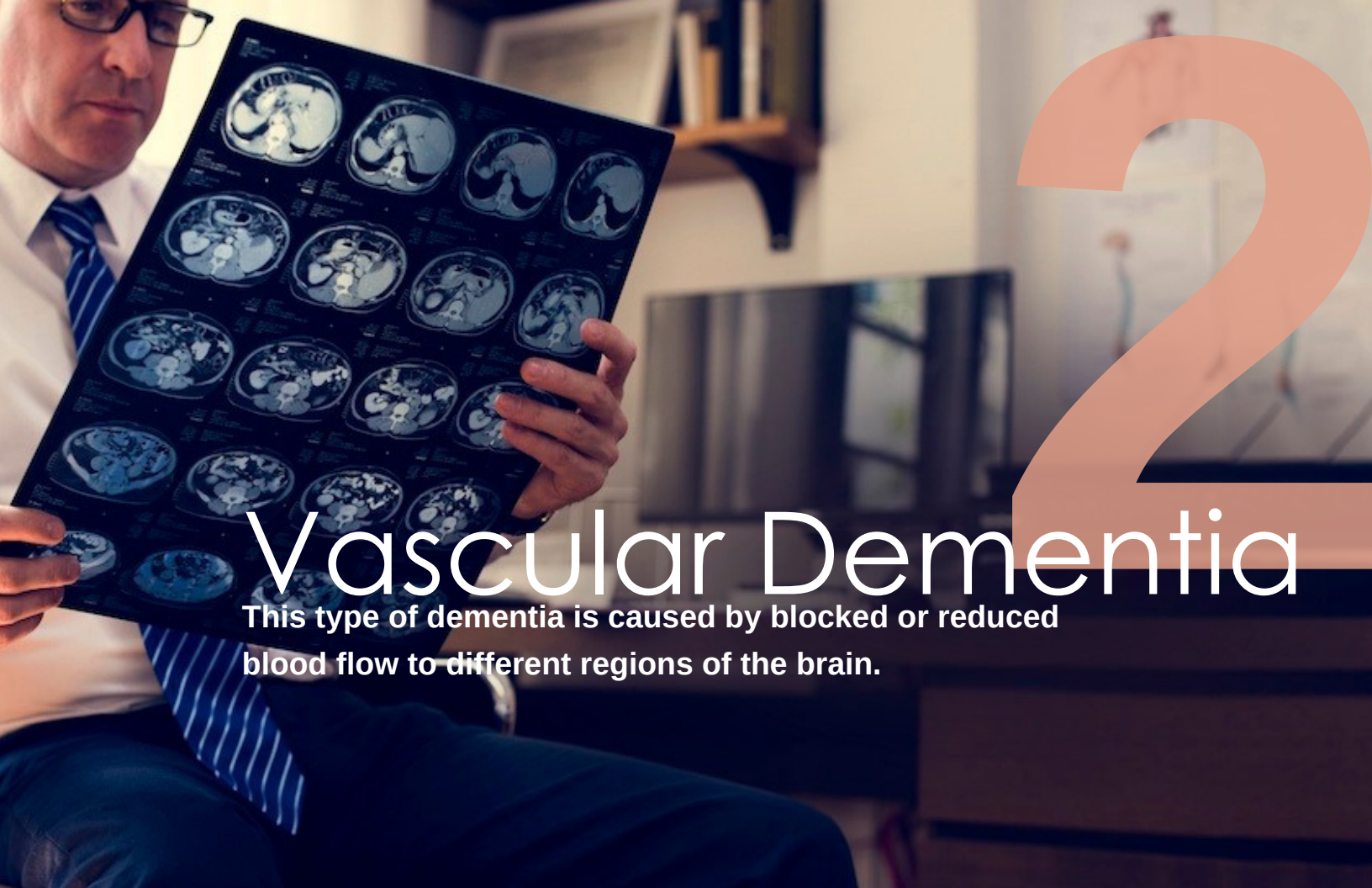
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Trouble recognizing friends and family

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Increased anxiety & agitation





# Vascular Dementia

This type of dementia is caused by blocked or reduced blood flow to different regions of the brain.

## COMMON SYMPTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH VASCULAR DEMENTIA INCLUDE:

Memory problems  
that affect daily life

Trouble speaking or  
understanding speech

Difficulty recognizing  
familiar sights or sounds

Increased confusion  
or agitation

Changes in  
personality or mood

Trouble with  
balance and walking

“

...In vascular dementia, changes in thinking skills sometimes occur suddenly after a stroke, which blocks major blood vessels in the brain. Thinking difficulties may also begin as mild changes that gradually worsen as a result of multiple minor strokes or another condition that affects smaller blood vessels, leading to widespread damage.”

**Alzheimer's Association**



# 3 Lewy Body Dementia

Lewy bodies are abnormal clumps of protein found in the brain that affect an individual's cognitive functioning.



COMMON SYMPTOMS  
CAUSED BY THIS TYPE OF  
DEMENTIA INCLUDE:

Hunched posture

Rigid muscles

A shuffling walk

Trouble with thinking  
clearly or making  
decisions

A shortened attention span

Memory loss

Unusual sleepiness during the day

Periods of staring or  
“blinking out”

“Most experts estimate that Lewy body dementia is the third most common cause of dementia after Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia, accounting for 5% to 10% of cases.”

Alzheimer's Association

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## Frontotemporal Dementia

In Frontotemporal dementia, the nerve cells and their connections found in the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain break down. Because these areas of the brain are often associated with personality, behavior, and language, individuals diagnosed with Frontotemporal dementia experience changes in behavior, personality, thinking, and reasoning.

### OTHER COMMON SYMPTOMS OF FRONTOTEMPORAL DEMENTIA INCLUDE:



Trouble with  
balance



Difficulty walking or  
changes in posture



Muscle spasms or  
stiffness



Language comprehension and  
speaking problems

## Mixed Dementia

Your loved one may be experiencing a combination of different dementias. According to the Mayo Clinic, "...studies of the brains of people 80 and older who had dementia indicate that many had a combination of several causes, such as Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, and Lewy body dementia.

The term "mixed dementia" simply means that the person diagnosed with dementia is living with more than one type. While research is still ongoing to determine how symptoms are affected by mixed dementia, these symptoms will vary from person to person depending on which areas of the brain are affected. An individual's symptoms may reflect one form of dementia, but it is also likely that symptoms may suggest that multiple forms of dementia are present.

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# IS IT Dementia?

Dementia is not reversible, and currently, there is no cure, but just because your family member is experiencing dementia-like symptoms does not mean that they are developing it. Several conditions that imitate dementia and its symptoms.

## Medication Side Effects

It is common to begin taking more medications as we age, but our bodies may also start to have trouble ridding themselves of the toxins that these medications produce. Additionally, when certain medications interact with one another, this may lead to side effects similar to common symptoms of dementia.

Talk with your family member's physician to see if their medications could be causing their symptoms. It is vital that their physician knows about any and all medications, including supplements, that your loved one takes to determine if any could be having adverse effects.

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## Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus

This is a condition caused by the buildup of spinal fluid in the brain. The Hydrocephalus Association states, "without appropriate diagnostic testing, [Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus] is often misdiagnosed as Alzheimer's disease or Parkinson's disease, or the symptoms are attributed to the aging process."

When the spinal fluid builds up in the brain, it causes pressure that can lead to brain tissue damage. This pressure can lead to dementia-like symptoms such as trouble with memory or a lack of concentration, but, unlike dementia, this condition can be treated and reversed.

# Horizons Memory Care

Each Oaks Senior Living community offers a specialized memory care neighborhood called Horizons to support the needs of residents living with dementia or another memory impairment. Bright and comfortable common areas with a centralized shared space help minimize agitation and confusion, while the layout and straight hallways allow residents to locate their apartment with ease. Horizons is a secure neighborhood, yet the environment remains open and unrestrictive, giving residents freedom of movement and a sense of “home.”

Our Horizons team members receive specialized training on helping those living with memory impairments while offering compassionate care. Through collaboration and tiered programming, our Horizons Lifestyle Directors and care partners ensure residents receive frequent socialization, stimulation, and independence, regardless of their level of cognitive functioning.

While dementia cannot be cured, it is important to get an early diagnosis. This can help prevent or slow the progression of the disease or lead to the discovery of another treatable condition.



To learn more about our memory care services, we encourage you to **contact a member of the Oaks Senior Living team.**

