

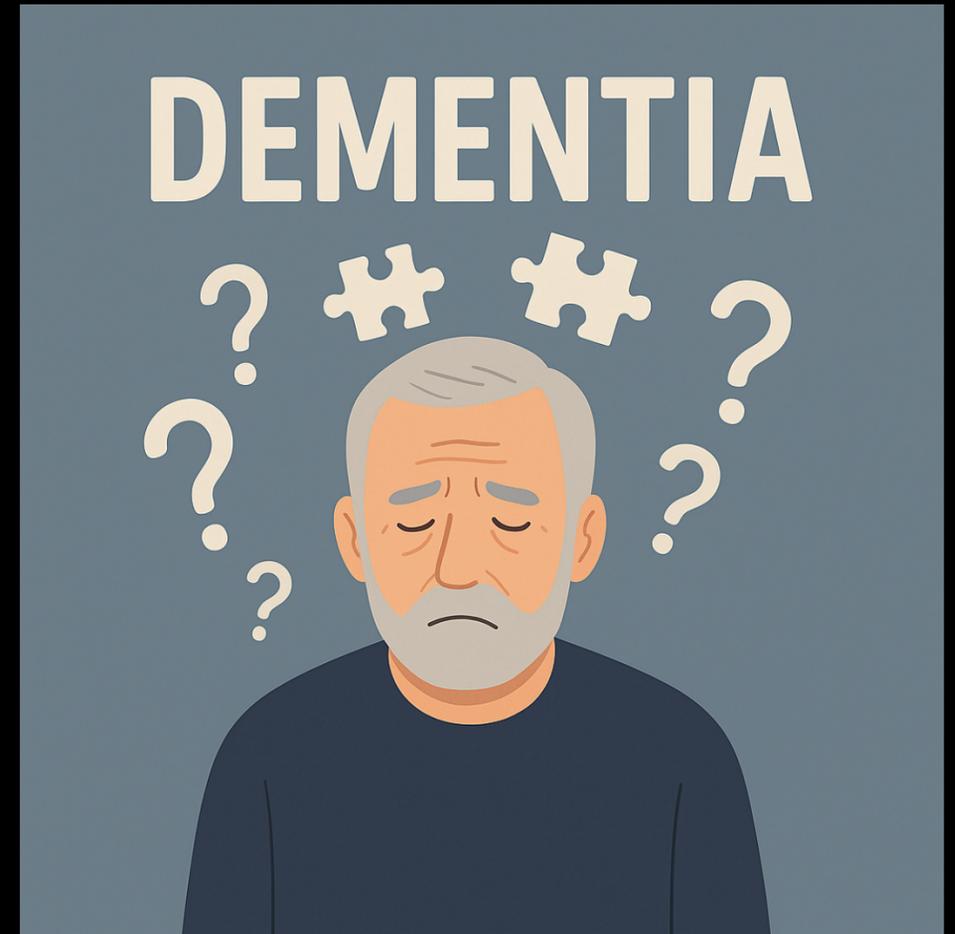
FAMILY ROLE IN PATIENTS WITH DEMENTIA

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COPE WITH BEHAVIOR
DISTURBANCES THAT COME WITH DEMENTIA



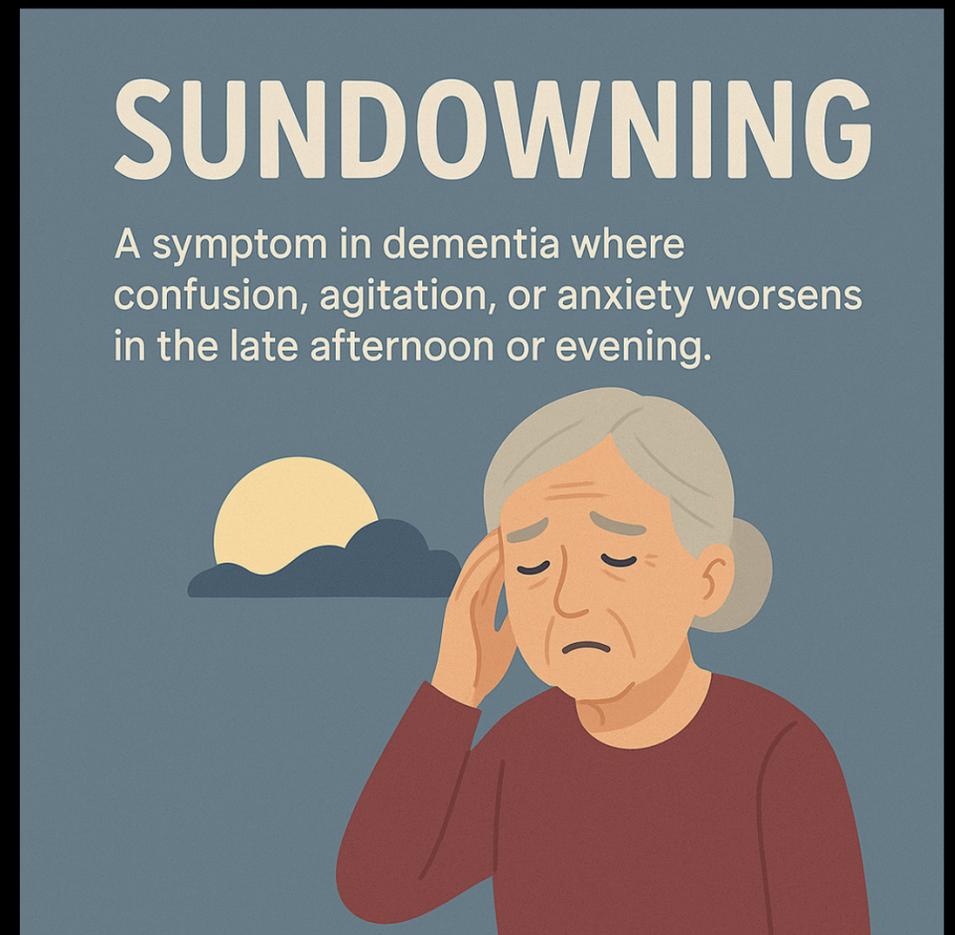
What Is Dementia?

- Group of symptoms affecting memory, social abilities, personality, and thinking
- Memory Loss is Defining Symptom
- Can Significantly Interfere with Daily Functioning



Common Warning Symptom: Sundowning

- Confusion, agitation, or anxiety worsens in the late afternoon or evening
- Happens late in the day (evening/night)
- Caused by fatigue, disrupted body clock, or low light
- Managed with routines, calming environments, and reduced evening stimulation

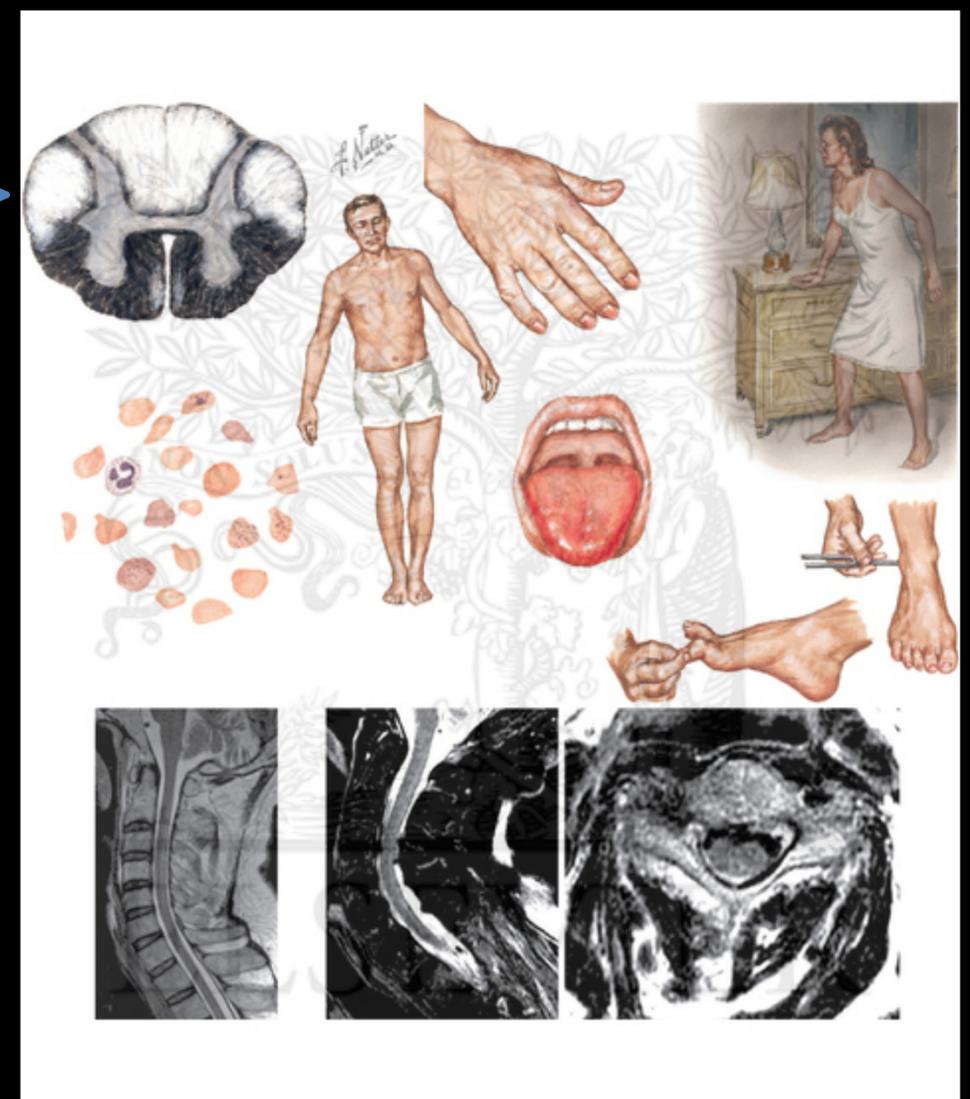
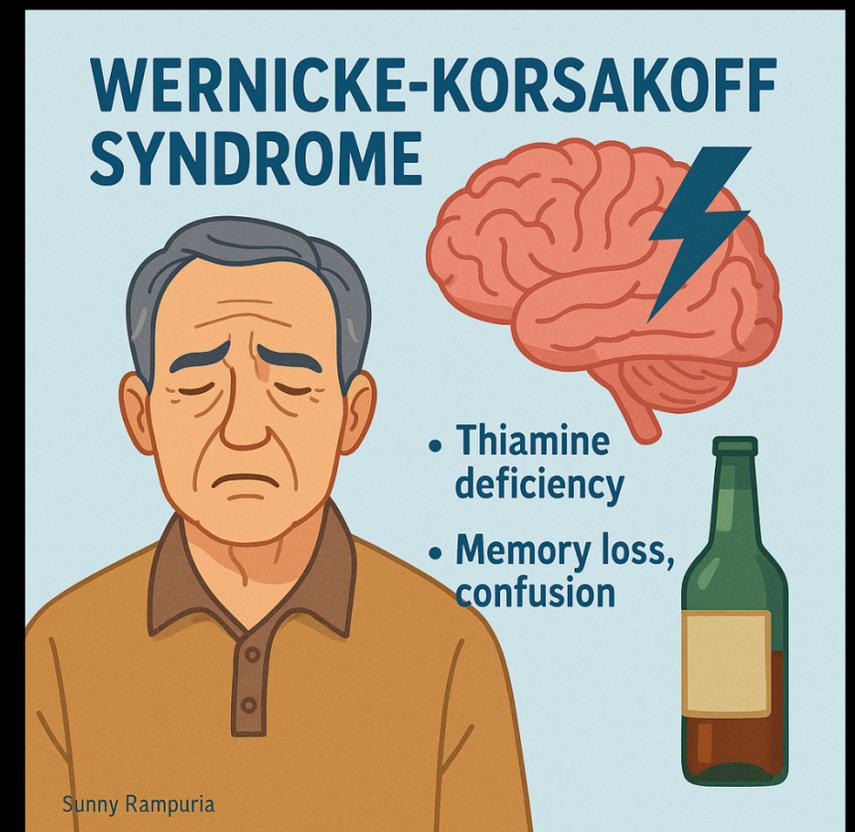


Causes of Dementia

- **Alzheimer's Disease:**
 - Abnormal buildup of amyloid plaques and tau tangles in the brain
 - Memory loss, confusion, and impaired reasoning; typically affects 65+ year olds
- **Parkinson's Disease:**
 - Loss of dopamine-producing neurons in the brain
 - Tremors, rigidity, slow movement, and cognitive decline; usually affects 60+ year olds
- **Vascular Dementia:**
 - Reduced blood flow to the brain due to stroke or small vessel disease
 - Affects memory and decision-making in stepwise fashion
- **Lewy Body Dementia:**
 - Abnormal Lewy body protein deposits in the brain
 - Fluctuating cognition, **visual hallucinations**, and motor symptoms
- **Frontotemporal Dementia:**
 - Degeneration of the frontal and temporal brain lobes
 - Personality changes (hyper-orality and hyper sexuality) prominent; typically affects 40-60 year olds
- **Huntington's Disease:**
 - Autosomal dominant disorder caused by HTT gene mutation
 - Movement problems, mood changes, and dementia; affects 30–50 year olds
- **Traumatic Brain Injury:**
 - Head trauma (falls, accidents)
 - Memory loss, mood swings, and cognitive issues
- **Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease:**
 - Caused by misfolded prion proteins; rare
 - RAPID mental decline and motor dysfunction; usually affects people 60–70 years old and immunocompromised organ transplant recipients

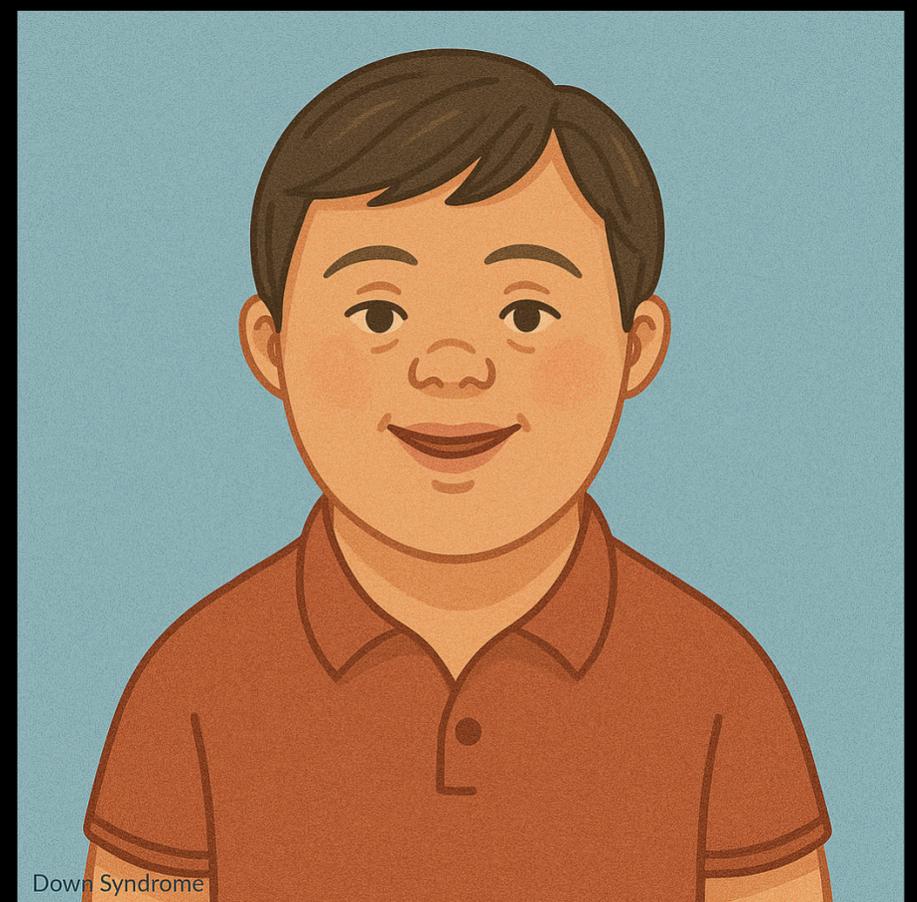
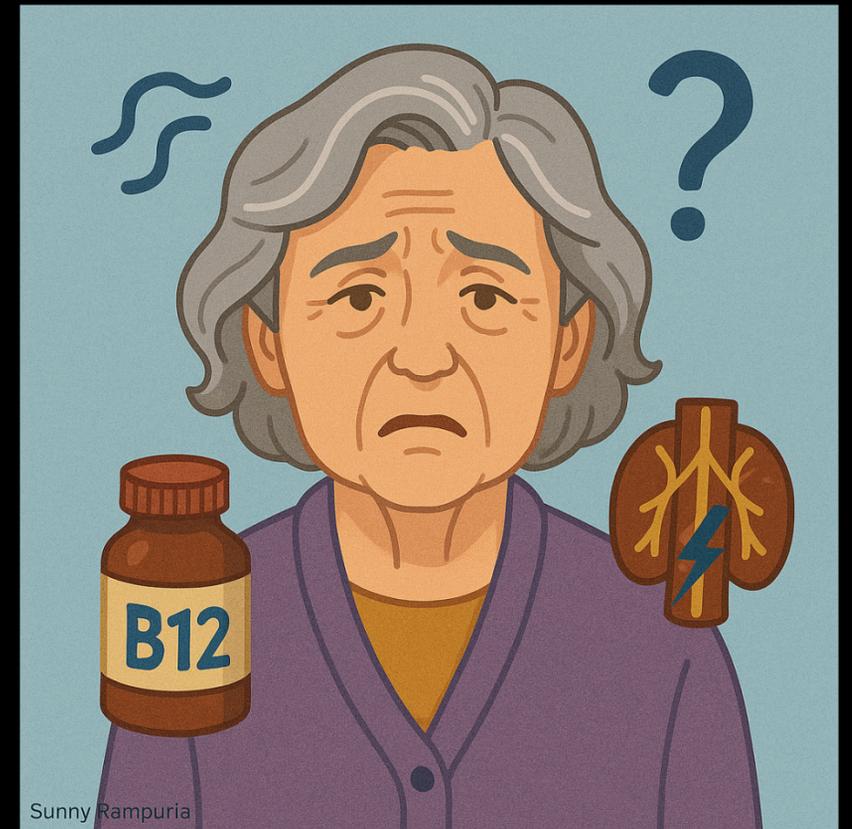
Other Causes of Dementia

- Infections: can lead to temporary delirium
- Rx: Treat Infection
- Metabolic or Endocrine Deficiencies
 - Alcoholics Greatly Affected
 - Thiamine (B1) Deficiency: **Wernicke-Korsakoff Syndrome**
 - B12 deficiency: **Subacute Combined Degeneration**
- Medication Side Effects
- Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus: **“Wet, Wacky, Wobbly”**
 - Urinary incontinence, dementia, and abnormal gait
 - Due to Buildup of Cerebrospinal Fluid in Ventricles of Brain



Nonmodifiable Risk Factors

- **Age**
 - Increased Risk at 65+ Years Old
- **Family History**
 - **Ex. Down Syndrome** (trisomy 21)
 - Gene for building amyloid protein is on chromosome 21
 - Increased risk of early-onset Alzheimer's as a result



Recommendations

- **Diet**

- Mediterranean: fish, fruits, vegetables, cereals, olive oil, and nuts

- **Activity**

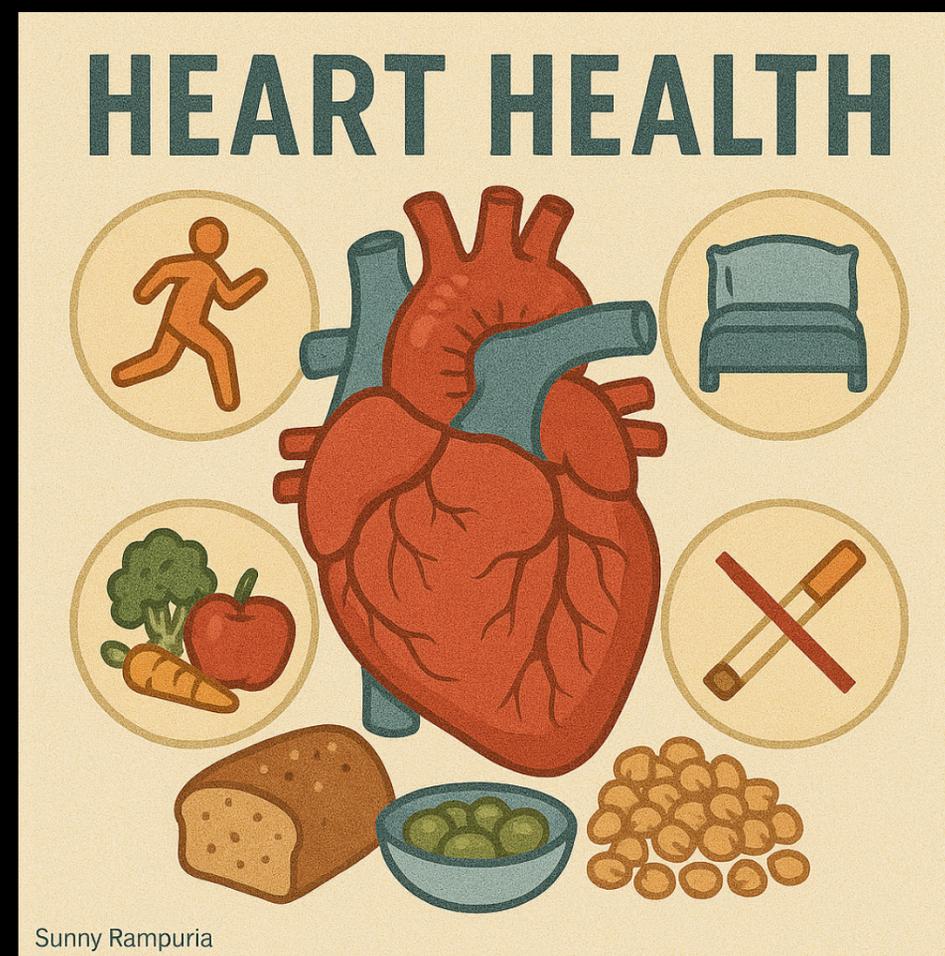
- Encourage exercise and social activity
- 7 or more hours of sleep nightly

- **Heart Health**

- Keep LDL Cholesterol Low
- Prevent Type II Diabetes through healthy diet and regular exercise
- No smoking or alcohol use

- **Medicines**

- Limit sedative use if possible



Behavior Disturbances in Dementia

Fluctuate in Severity!

Agitation – restlessness, pacing, yelling, or resisting care

Aggression – verbal or physical outbursts, hitting, or biting

Wandering – aimless walking, getting lost, especially at night

Hallucinations – seeing or hearing things that aren't there

Delusions – false beliefs (e.g., thinking someone is stealing)

Paranoia – suspicion of caregivers or loved ones

Sundowning – increased confusion, anxiety, or aggression in the late afternoon or evening

Repetitive behaviors – repeating words, phrases, or actions

Sleep disturbances – insomnia, nighttime waking, or reversal of sleep cycles

Apathy – lack of interest, motivation, or emotional response

Disinhibition – inappropriate comments, actions, or lack of social filters



Family Role in Dementia

- **Agitation:** provide reassurance, maintain routines and identify triggers
- **Aggression:** stay calm, avoid confrontation, and redirect attention
- **Wandering:** Ensure safety with supervision and monitor with ID tags (Find My Friends/Apple AirTags)
- **Hallucinations:** Provide reassurance and avoid argument about what is real
- **Apathy:** Encourage participation gently and provide reward for participation
- **Disinhibition:** Set boundaries kindly and redirect inappropriate behavior
- **Sleep Disturbances:** Promote consistent sleeping habits, limit daytime naps, and avoid stimulants (caffeine) in evenings
- **Sundowning:** Minimize late-afternoon stress and providing a calm environment

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