

Unveiling Dementia: Causes, Effects, and Demographics Explained



by [Bianca Dudley](#) on August 28

Dementia is not an actual disease, but is actually a symptom associated with many other illnesses such as, Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. Dementia is brought about by some injury to the brain that in turn causes an impairment of cognitive function. Depending on the specific illness, dementia can manifest in various ways. The effects dementia can have on the human body are frightening. The loss of mobility paired with mental decline, brings about difficult questions and life-changing decisions.

This is why it is important to understand the risk factors of dementia and learn how to spot the early signs of its development.

Dementia can be brought about in two ways; genetically and as an effect of lifestyle. Certain illnesses caused by a genetic mutation have been known to bring about this symptom. One important genetic disorder that can bring about dementia is Down Syndrome. Down syndrome is caused by an additional chromosome 21 that leads to developmental disabilities as well as a distinct physical appearance. With the extra chromosome, complex molecules known as beta-amyloid proteins build up. This protein is the foundation of early-onset Alzheimer's. It's believed that one in every three people with Down Syndrome develops a form of dementia, the most common being Alzheimer's. Another type of hereditary dementia is Familial Alzheimer's. Familial Alzheimer's affects only 1% of all cases and this type of dementia usually results from three genetic mutations passed down throughout generations. These mutations involve the amyloid protein, the presenilin 1 gene, and the presenilin 2 gene. The genes for this disease follow an autosomal dominant pattern meaning if a parent is affected by these mutations, there is a fifty percent chance their offspring will be as well. People suffering from Familial Alzheimer's usually experience an early onset of diminishing cognitive functions. These may include memory loss, difficulty speaking, and behavioral changes. Many forms of dementia can result due to an inherited genetic mutation. For example, Vascular Dementia is not necessarily inherited but the genes that increase the risk of the illness can be. Although familial dementia is rare, it is important to be aware of its dangers and the genetic factors that contribute to each disease.

Many groups of people are also at risk of developing some form of dementia due to their age, ethnicity, location, and lifestyle. When discussing age as a factor, there are many things to consider. As people age, their bodies get weaker making them more susceptible to illnesses. Certain illnesses can damage the body in a way that leads to dementia. These include Parkinson's, kidney disease, and high blood pressure. Age also plays a role in the amount of time dementia has to develop. Some illnesses that result in dementia take many years to develop or to start showing signs. As one ages, the possibility of an underlying disease popping up becomes more likely. Bad habits such as smoking, excessive drinking, and inactivity also lead to a person's likeliness of developing dementia. These habits bring about their respective health problems that in many cases can lead to dementia later in life.

A person's ethnicity and location can contribute greatly to dementia as well. As some studies show, people who are African, Caribbean, and South Asian are more likely to develop dementia than White people. This is because these groups are predisposed to diabetes and cardiovascular disease, both of which the symptom of dementia is a risk. Certain locations also have a very low quality of life. This then leads to decreased health and an increased chance of developing dementia.

As stated before, dementia, no matter its manifestation, is a very damaging symptom. Paired with an illness, this symptom can lead to one's loss of independence as well as the loss of one's livelihood. The hereditary probability of developing dementia, though small, is still an important factor when thinking about one's future health. More importantly, the decisions one makes about lifestyle and activity are indispensable when preserving the longevity of a healthy mind.