

# Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) Dementia: A Guide for Patients & Families

---

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) is a brain condition associated with repeated head injuries or concussions over time. It has been described in athletes, military veterans, and others with a history of repeated brain trauma. Symptoms may develop years after the injuries and can include changes in mood, behavior, thinking, and memory. While there is currently no cure, supportive care and symptom management can help improve quality of life.

## Common Signs & Symptoms

- Memory problems
- Difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly
- Mood changes such as depression or irritability
- Impulsivity or poor judgment
- Aggression or behavioral changes
- Anxiety or emotional instability
- Headaches or sleep disturbances

## How CTE May Present Over Time

- Early: mood changes, irritability, impulsivity
- Middle: worsening memory, judgment, and behavior
- Later: significant cognitive decline, dementia, and increased dependence

## Risk Factors

- Repeated head injuries or concussions
- Participation in contact sports
- Military service with blast exposure
- History of traumatic brain injury

## Diagnosis

- Currently, CTE can only be definitively diagnosed after death through brain tissue analysis
- During life, doctors evaluate symptoms, history of head injuries, and may use imaging and cognitive testing
- Other causes of symptoms are carefully ruled out

## Treatment & Management

### Symptom Management

- Treatment of depression, anxiety, or mood symptoms
- Medications for sleep or behavioral symptoms when needed
- Cognitive support strategies

### Supportive Care

- Structured daily routines
- Regular physical activity as tolerated
- Social engagement
- Support for caregivers and family members

### Safety Considerations


- Monitor for impulsive or risky behavior
- Address fall risk and safety concerns
- Monitor for mood changes or suicidal thoughts
- Ensure safe medication use

### When to Seek Medical Attention

- Worsening memory or behavior changes
- New confusion or significant mood changes
- Safety concerns for the individual or others
- Signs of depression or suicidal thoughts

## National Organizations & Resources

✓ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Brain Injury

 [cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury](https://cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury)


✓ National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)

 [ninds.nih.gov](https://ninds.nih.gov)

✓ Alzheimer's Association

 800-272-3900 |  [alz.org](https://alz.org)

✓ Eldercare Locator

 1-800-677-1116 |  [eldercare.acl.gov](https://eldercare.acl.gov)

## Final Notes

- CTE is associated with repeated head injuries and may develop years later.
- Symptoms can affect mood, behavior, and thinking.
- Early recognition and supportive care can improve quality of life.