

NEWSLETTER



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MENTAL HEALTH & BRAIN HEALTH

BRAIN HEALTH AND PHYSICAL HEALTH ARE ESSENTIAL FOR LIVING A LONG AND HEALTHY LIFE. IT IS CRITICAL TO KEEP YOUR BRAIN ACTIVE BY DOING WHATEVER YOU CAN TO KEEP YOUR MIND ALERT AND ENGAGED.

- Chances are you or someone you know is living with dementia; it is the most common brain health diagnosis
- It is important to know the many risk factors of dementia in order to take steps to protect your brain and reduce your risk and the risks of those you love

KEY INFORMATION

- Anxiety is an illness seen among older adults, often affecting as many as 10-20% of the older population; sadly it is often undiagnosed
- Over half a million Canadians are living with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia
- In the next 30 years, this number will triple as the population ages



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TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHALENJ

- Mental health/brain health
- Manage anxiety
- Dementia & types of dementia
- Risk factors of dementia
- Dementia support programs
- Alzheimer's & stages of Alzheimer's
- Warning signs of Alzheimer's
- Further resources



MENTAL HEALTH

For too long society has accepted that mental health problems are a natural by-product of aging. Research has shown that to be incorrect and has even found that some mental health challenges are preventable and even times treatable, such as anxiety.

Although anxiety is common to many it becomes problematic when it interferes with your daily functioning, your quality of life, and even your health.

The four most common anxiety disorder amongst older adults are:

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
- Social anxiety disorder
- Phobia
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)

Always seek medical intervention if your anxiety exceeds typical, everyday worries.

For further independent learning use McMaster's Optimal Aging Portal on anxiety disorders, linked below.

Late-life anxiety disorders are considered to be twice as widespread as dementia among older adults.

Some common symptoms of anxiety are:

- Uncontrollable feelings of panic, fear, and/or apprehension
- Obsessive thoughts
- Reactions disproportional to the triggering fear
- Restlessness
- Trouble with memory and focus
- Insomnia
- Nightmares
- Refusal to engage in routine activities
- Ritualistic behaviors (e.g., repeated handwashing)

Watch this video to learn more about Canadian seniors and mental health.....



Free online course
on Anxiety
(McMaster Univ)

<https://www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org/e-learning/anxiety-disorders>

MANAGE ANXIETY

There are some recommended lifestyle practices to manage anxiety.

- Talk: Oftentimes, acknowledging/sharing feelings, worries and experiences can help. Consider joining a support group for those with anxiety disorders, or talk with a trusted friend, family member, or spiritual leader.
- Manage stress: Exercise, meditation, yoga, mindfulness, deep breathing, and other techniques can help relieve the physical symptoms and make you feel relaxed.
- Avoid stimulants: These include caffeine, nicotine, over-the-counter cold medications, alcohol, and certain herbal supplements.
- Limit news: Current events with too much negative news can contribute to anxiety
- Sleep: Older adults should aim to get 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night.

The following links contain reliable information and resources on anxiety:

Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada:

1 888 223-2252

Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario:

1 800 875-6213

<https://www.ncoa.org/article/anxiety-and-older-adults-a-guide-to-getting-the-relief-you-need>









<https://www.ncoa.org/article/may-you-sleep-better-for-health-and-longevity>



BRAIN HEALTH

Be aware - even though you can control and reduce some risk factors of dementia, others are out of your control, such as age and genetics.

Brain Canada is dedicated to raising funds, pursuing grants, and strengthening the brain research community. The goal is to gain a better understanding of how the brain works, which may lead to contributions to the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and cure of brain disorders, thereby improving Canadians' health outcomes.

 <p>Exercising your brain with new cognitive exercises, like learning a new language or instrument.</p>	 <p>Protecting your head from injury.</p>
 <p>Staying socially connected with friends, family and neighbours.</p>	 <p>Being physically active.</p>
 <p>Eating a healthy diet by including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts in your meals.</p>	 <p>Taking care of your hearing by getting annual evaluations and wearing a hearing aid, if needed.</p>
 <p>Visiting your doctor or other healthcare providers regularly.</p>	 <p>Quitting smoking and reducing alcohol intake.</p>

Making lifestyle changes that promote brain health may help delay the onset and slow the progression of dementia.

As a national convener and enabler of the Canadian brain research community, Brain Canada is supporting efforts to reduce health inequities. This includes efforts to assess the different ways that brain diseases and disorders affect men, women, and gender diverse groups, and various stages of neurodevelopment and aging. Brain Canada's goal, in the process, is to advance sex and gender brain science and remove systemic barriers and biases to ensure that all individuals have equal access to – and will benefit from – the results of bold brain research. ([source: https://braincanada.ca/about/what-we-do/](https://braincanada.ca/about/what-we-do/))



THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

Which activity above do you feel you can commit to moving forward?

Are you or anyone you know showing signs of anxiety? What strategy would you feel comfortable implementing or sharing with others?

DEMENTIA

Many people forget things, have mood swings, or mix up words from time to time. When it begins to interfere with your daily functioning it may be cause for concern.

Dementia is a broad term for the following symptoms that may interfere with daily activities:



- memory loss
- difficulties with thinking
- trouble problem solving
- struggling to make decisions
- mood changes
- confusion with language

It is believed that one million Canadians may be living with dementia by 2030.

Currently, there is no cure and no treatments that can stop or reverse dementia symptoms. It is a fatal, progressive, degeneration of the brain in which brain cells die over time, meaning the body will eventually shut down.

Learning how to live well with dementia by managing its symptoms, may help you gain not only control but also confidence.

Dementia.

How to reduce the risk?



Look after your heart



Be physically active



Follow a healthy diet



Challenge your brain



Enjoy social activity

TYPES OF DEMENTIA

There are said to be over 400 types of dementia; Alzheimer's disease is the most common type, below are a few others:

Young onset dementia: symptoms begin prior to age 65

Vascular dementia: the brain's blood supply is blocked or damaged, causing brain cells to be deprived of oxygen and die

Lewy body dementia: abnormal deposits of protein called alpha-synuclein inside of the brain's nerve cells

Frontotemporal dementia: a group of rare disorders that primarily affect the areas of the brain associated with personality and behaviour

Mixed dementia: having more than one type of dementia

LATE-NC: Limbic-predominant age-related TDP-43 encephalopathy (or LATE-NC) is the most recently identified form of dementia

Click on any of the dementia names above to learn more. You can also click on the link below to further understand of one or more types of dementia.



<https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/what-is-dementia/types-of-dementia>

RISK FACTORS OF DEMENTIA

Almost 50% of dementia cases may be the result of twelve key modifiable risk factors:

High blood pressure

Smoking

Diabetes

Obesity

Lack of physical activity

Poor diet

High alcohol consumption

Low levels of cognitive engagement

Depression

Traumatic brain injury

Hearing loss

Social isolation

Being physically active, socially connected and challenging your brain can improve your long-term health and can help you to bounce back from illness.

DEMENTIA SUPPORT PROGRAMS

It is important to know that there are many types of support available; not only for people living with dementia but also for families and caregivers – dementia affects everyone.

If you are caring for someone living with dementia, it is important to know ways in which you can maintain their quality of life.

There are hundreds of unique programs across Canada.



For programs and services offered through Alzheimer's Society...

Click Here



<https://alzheimer.ca/en/help-support/programs-services>

Three main categories of programs are:

Brain health programs:

- promote a brain-healthy lifestyle
- experiencing meaningful and beneficial socialization
- stimulation through several varied activities

Day programs and respite care:

- provide social, recreational, and therapeutic activities
- offer support for family caregivers who provide daily care

Art and music therapy:

- provide relief and help fight symptoms
- workshops are especially helpful for people in the middle to late stages of dementia
- providing relaxation
- encourage pleasant memories

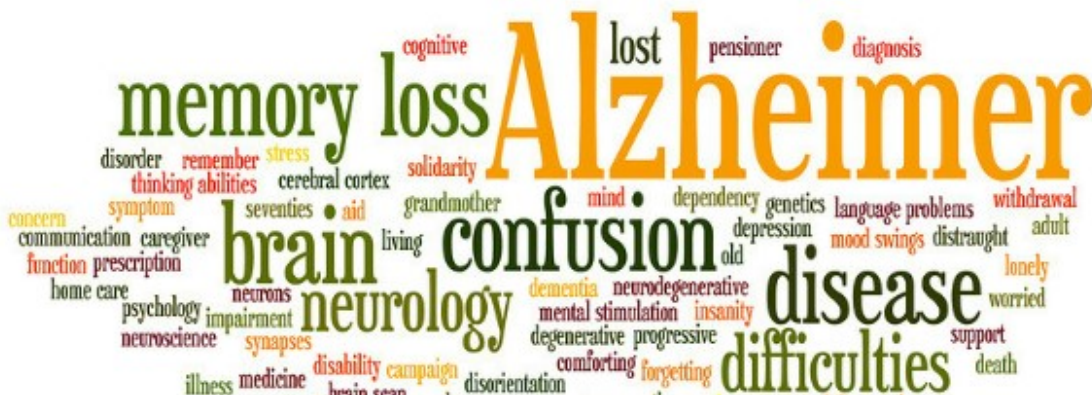
ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Alzheimer's disease is a type of dementia; however, not all people with dementia have Alzheimer's. Alzheimer's disease accounts for 60 to 80% of all dementia diagnoses, making it the most common to date.

It is a chronic, progressive, neurodegenerative disease that destroys brain cells over time, resulting in the deterioration of thinking and memory.

Alzheimer's disease, like other types of dementia, is neither a normal part of aging nor is it reversible.

If you or someone you know has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia in Canada, one of the first things you should do is contact your local Alzheimer's Society. The group in your area can help connect you with programmes, services, education, and resources for your specific needs.



WARNING SIGNS OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Society needs to understand that Dementia is not a normal part of aging, some symptoms may be similar, but they are NOT the same. With Alzheimer's disease there are warning signs.



The Alzheimer's Society lists 10:

1. Memory loss that affects day-to-day abilities
2. Difficulty performing familiar tasks
3. Problems with language
4. Disorientation to time and place
5. Impaired judgment
6. Problems with abstract thinking
7. Misplacing things
8. Changes in mood and behaviour
9. Changes in personality
10. Loss of initiative

KNOW the 10 SIGNS

The earlier the diagnosis, the higher the chances are for a better quality of life while living with the disease.

Stimulating the brain is one of the best ways to stay mentally active.

STAGES OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Early stage:

- mild symptoms
- person is fully aware of their condition
- needs only minimal assistance

Middle stage:

- symptoms start becoming more noticeable
- more assistance is needed to help accomplish daily tasks

Late stage:

- may become unable to communicate verbally
- exceedingly difficult to look after themselves
- quality of care is important to ensure quality of life

End-of-life:

- cognitive decline has progressed
- 24-hour care is needed
- palliative care and comfort are the focus to ensure quality of death

Additional Resources

AGING - A NEW REALITY; Podcast

- Brain Health and Physical Health: Dr. Jenny Ingram----Kawartha Centre, redefining healthy aging----Dementia specialist [Part 1](#) [Part 2](#)
- Supporting Mental Health - Iain Buchanan, Registered Psychotherapist [Part 1](#) [Part 2](#)

- [Coursera: The Science of Well-Being](#); Increase your own happiness and build more productive habits with [Dr. Laurie Santos](#)

- [Alzheimer Society of Canada](#)
- [The Canadian Dementia Learning and Resource Network](#)
- [McMaster OPTIMAL AGING PORTAL](#)