

What are the Early Warning Signs of Dementia?

A person may exhibit some or all of these signs:

Memory

- Repeats stories or questions
- Forgets appointments
- Difficulty recalling recent events (e.g., what they ate or who they spoke to)
- Difficulty remembering or taking medications
- Difficulty learning new things
- Constantly searches for misplaced items (keys, wallet, jewelry)
- Puts things in unusual places (e.g., jewelry in a sugar bowl)
- Gets lost driving to familiar places or walking in own neighborhood
- Confusion about day, month, or year
- Confusion about location or how they got there

Attention and Focus

- Difficulty keeping up with a conversation
- Responds inappropriately to a conversation
- Difficulty reading or spelling
- Appears distracted or disoriented during daily activities
- May obsess over misplaced items

Orientation and Spatial Awareness

- Gets lost in familiar areas or public places (stores, malls)
- Disoriented to time and place
- Confusion about surroundings or travel routes

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Executive Functioning (Planning, Judgment, Decision-Making)

- Difficulty performing familiar tasks (e.g., cooking, laundry)
- Neglects household chores, allows clutter or spoilage
- Hoards food or objects
- Attempts to “fix” things unnecessarily, causing damage
- Poor or decreased judgment
- Chooses inappropriate clothing for the weather
- Makes unsafe decisions without awareness of consequences
- Difficulty managing money (balancing checkbook, paying bills)
- Withdraws or gives away large sums of money to scams or telemarketers
- Spends excessively or repeatedly buys unneeded items
- Difficulty planning and executing projects or events

Communication and Language

- Trouble keeping up with conversations
- Difficulty reading or spelling
- May say or do inappropriate or embarrassing things (“no filter”)
- May have difficulty expressing themselves coherently

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Personality and Behavior Changes

- Becomes more aggressive, passive, or markedly different
- Displays eccentric or bizarre behaviors
- Becomes suspicious, fearful, or paranoid
- Exhibits inappropriate emotional responses
- Shows loss of social inhibition

Motivation and Initiative

- Lacks motivation to engage in hobbies or activities once enjoyed
- Spends extended periods sitting or watching TV
- Sleeps more than usual
- Claims to “not feel good” to avoid activities
- Has trouble thinking of things to do independently

Self-Care and Hygiene

- Stops bathing or grooming appropriately
- Wears the same soiled clothes repeatedly
- Neglects dental care