

Normal Aging vs. Signs of Dementia

Symptom	Normal Aging Process	Signs of Dementia
Memory Loss	It is estimated that about 40% of people will suffer from memory loss as they age and it is not caused by dementia. It can be normal to have moments of forgetfulness that can be remembered later.	One of the most prominent characteristics of dementia. It is normal for dementia patients to have more severe memory loss that does not get better. Dementia typically affects short-term memory the strongest.
Cognitive Functioning	It is normal for these processes to slow down during aging and it takes your loved one longer to juggle multiple activities at once.	These symptoms are a sign of dementia when the “slowing down” affects being able to live independently and manage everyday life from bathing, getting dressed, meal prep, paying bills, medication management, and light housework.
Communicating	During the aging process, it can be normal to momentarily forget a word or a phrase. Usually, these are remembered later and do not affect a person’s ability to communicate.	People with Dementia have a problem communicating. Both speaking and understanding become difficult as the disease progresses through its stages. It is common for someone to have a hard time remembering a word or phrase and understanding and engaging in conversations.

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Problem-Solving	Problem-solving can become more difficult and slow down as people age. Studies have proven that older individuals use the information they have learned to make decisions instead of learning something new. A normal example is that a decision might take longer to decide but does not affect daily life.	Dementia patients have a problem communicating. Both speaking and understanding become difficult as the disease progresses through its stages. It is common for someone to have a hard time remembering a word or phrase and understanding and engaging in conversations.
Behavior and Personality	During the aging process, it is not considered normal for someone's personality to change or have erratic periods in their behavior.	Dementia patients experience both personality and behavior changes. It is normal for your loved one to form an aggressive personality when they were sweet before their diagnosis.
Ability to Complete Activities of Daily Living	As a person ages, the normal changes that take place in the brain and body do not affect if someone can safely live independently. Even though there might be noticeable changes they can still responsibly take their medication, get to medical appointments, clean their house and buy and cook food.	In people with dementia, activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living are affected. That means that basic hygiene becomes difficult and suffers, one has a hard time preparing meals and grocery shopping, housework, and light maintenance become too hard.