

What is Dementia?

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Dementia in any form is a difficult diagnosis to accept. It's referred to as "the long good-bye", because the course of the disease is about 8 - 10 years from the time of diagnosis. The number one cause of dementia is aging. The beginning of the signs and symptoms are generally seen after the age of 60, with prevalence of the disease doubling every five years after that.

Forgetfulness is normal, but memory loss is not a natural part of aging. Making new thought pathways by continuing to learn new things helps decrease the chances of developing dementia. Doing activities such as puzzles, crosswords and Sudoku challenge the short-term memory. Eating less processed foods and a more natural, well-balanced diet has also been shown to be beneficial. Regular exercise, such as walking is important. Quitting smoking, and controlling high blood pressure and diabetes can help reduce the risk of vascular dementia.

A thorough evaluation by an interdisciplinary team of health care professionals is an important step. Once the causes of the memory loss are determined, a personalized plan of treatment can be developed. Treating medical conditions that can lead to confusion, often improves mental functioning. Vision correction, hearing aids and added companionship may be suggested if there are sensory deprivation issues. Dental care, dietary modifications and nutritional supplements may be needed to improve overall health and maintain proper weight. Safety concerns may call for environmental changes and personal assistive devices. People suffering from dementia need structured routines, quiet, and calm. Medications may help reduce the symptoms, but they don't cure the disease.

If you or a loved one is dealing with dementia, you're not alone. There are multiple informational and community resources, support groups, in-home support services, and short or long-term stay care facility options. Haven Manor offers a free community service to help you find the support you need. Just contact us by calling (402) 792-3088.