

# What is Dementia?

Dementia is an umbrella term that refers to loss of memory, judgement and reasoning, as well as changes in mood, behaviour and communication abilities. These changes are enough to cause difficulty in day-to-day functioning. It is important to remember that dementia is not a disease itself, but rather a group of symptoms, which may accompany certain diseases or conditions.

## Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias

**Alzheimer's disease** is a physical, progressive and degenerative disease of the brain, characterized by plaques and tangles that cause brain cells to die. Alzheimer's disease is a non-reversible dementia that has a very subtle onset; no one event or period can define the beginning of the disease. Symptoms include loss of memory, difficulty with day-to-day tasks and changes in mood and behaviour. These symptoms are NOT a normal part of aging.

**Vascular dementia, Lewy body dementia and Fronto-Temporal lobe dementia** are other types of dementia. Information and support is available from the Alzheimer Society of Calgary regardless of the type of dementia.

## DELIRIUM

Delirium is a confusional state that develops quickly (hours/days), causing dramatic changes in a person's thinking, behaviour and mood. It is a medical emergency (usually caused by an illness or a reaction to medications) and requires immediate medical attention. It is important to see a doctor if you notice any of the signs or symptoms of delirium.

## The Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

### MEMORY LOSS

Almost everyone experiences memory loss, like forgetting a grocery item or a phone number. A person with Alzheimer's disease will begin to forget more often, especially recent events.

### FAMILIAR TASKS

A person with Alzheimer's disease may have trouble with tasks that have been familiar to them all their lives. It may be because these once simple tasks become overwhelming.

### COMMUNICATION

While everyone occasionally experiences the "tip-of-the-tongue effect," a person with Alzheimer's disease may find it increasingly difficult to express themselves or understand what others are saying to them.

### DISORIENTATION

A person with Alzheimer's disease may not always recognize a place that would normally be very familiar to them, causing a feeling of disorientation. For instance, a person may become confused and lost in their own neighbourhood.

### JUDGEMENT

At times, we all make decisions that cause someone to question our judgement. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may no longer be able to recognize when a bad decision is made, such as going outside in winter wearing a t-shirt and shorts for a long period of time.

### ABSTRACT THINKING

The meaning of numbers and the ability to perform calculations may become challenging for a person with Alzheimer's disease, even though these activities were not difficult in the past.

### MISPLACED ITEMS

For someone with Alzheimer's disease, misplacing items can become quite frequent and the ability to find these objects difficult. They may also leave items in unusual places, like keys left in the bathroom medicine cabinet.

### MOOD AND BEHAVIOUR

There are often days when we don't feel like ourselves and are quick to anger or become tearful. These same feelings and emotions can happen to someone who has Alzheimer's disease, but are often more pronounced.

### PERSONALITY

Alzheimer's disease may cause a person to do or say something that is out of character for them. For example, a very social person may become withdrawn and no longer be as eager to see friends and family.

### INITIATIVE

A person with Alzheimer's disease may become very passive, or may not engage in activity or conversation. That person may require some cues or prompts to become engaged and take part in social activities.

## Contact

### Alzheimer Society of Calgary

#### Address

#201 - 222 58 Ave SW  
Calgary, AB  
T2H 2S3

#### Phone

(403) 290-0110

#### Toll Free

1-877-569-HELP/4357

#### Fax

(403) 269-8836

#### Email

info@alzheimercalgary.com

#### Charitable Registration

#13072 5740 RR0001

Access our website for up-to-date information, brochures, upcoming events and workshops, caregiving tips and more at:

[www.AlzheimerCalgary.com](http://www.AlzheimerCalgary.com)

**Alzheimer Society**  
CALGARY



## Alzheimer Society of Calgary

Dedicated to improving the quality of life for those living with dementia, their families and caregivers





# MANY PEOPLE'S LIVES ARE DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

## Alzheimer Society of Calgary

Many people's lives are directly affected by Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. At the Alzheimer Society of Calgary, we aim to improve the quality of life for those living with dementia and their families by offering personalized one-on-one support, training, workshops, resources and support groups in Calgary and surrounding areas.

### Support for Families and Individuals

Our Support Services Coordinators are registered social workers who provide free consultation for individuals and families seeking support, information and referral to community resources.

### Services for Individuals Living with Dementia

Education and support groups are available for individuals who have been diagnosed with early stage dementia and their care partners. These services include education opportunities and an early stage support group.

#### Dementia: Developing a Positive Perspective

A four week class for persons living with early stage dementia and a family member or care partner.

#### Living with Dementia

A four week class for the person living with early stage dementia.

### Adult Day Programs: Club 36

Club 36 is an adult day program for individuals living with dementia. It offers participants a meaningful day that maximizes the individual's independence and abilities in a caring, supportive environment. Club 36 also provides caregivers with weekly respite, enabling them to recharge and provide ongoing quality care at home.

### Support Groups

Support groups provide an opportunity for care partners and those living with dementia to share information, find support and benefit from interaction with others sharing similar experiences.

### Safely Home®

Safely Home® is a nation wide partnership between the Alzheimer Society of Canada and the RCMP designed to help find the person who is lost and assist in a safe return home. For more information on Safely Home®, visit the website at, [www.safelyhome.ca](http://www.safelyhome.ca)

### Online Dementia Basics®

Dementia Basics® can be accessed directly from our website. With increasing demand for up-to-date knowledge on dementia, we have developed an on-line educational resource. As a first step to understanding dementia and the disease process, this resource will benefit families living with dementia, community members and health professionals. For more information, visit our website at [www.AlzheimerCalgary.com](http://www.AlzheimerCalgary.com)

## Family Education



dctc

dementia care training centre

### Empowered Care: Learning Through Information, Stories and Strategies

Building the capacity of family care partners to support persons living with dementia while taking care of themselves through learning about dementia, sharing stories of resilience and offering strategies for providing care.

Empowered Care is also offered **ONLINE**. It includes:

- Online modules
- A workbook complete with reflection questions and activities
- An online forum where participants can interact and share experiences

### Considering Long Term Care

Families will learn how to access the long-term care system and explore the decision making process. This workshop addresses questions such as "How does the placement process work?" and "How can I help my family member adjust to long-term care?"

Contact our Support Services Coordinators for registration information at 403-290-0110.



## What's Good for Your Body is Good for Your Brain!

### Get a Healthy Brain IMAGE Today!

Although there are no guarantees for the prevention of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias; research shows that there are steps we can take towards maintaining a healthy brain. Try taking the following steps to improve your healthy brain IMAGE!

#### I love a challenge!

For your brain, a challenge is the equivalent to exercising your body and you need to continue to challenge and work your brain to keep it strong. Try mind challenging games like crosswords, playing an instrument or learning a new language.

#### Mind your stress levels

Stress causes your body to release chemicals that are damaging to the brain, especially if the stress persists over time. Reduce the stress in your life by taking time for yourself and seek support from family and friends.

#### Activate your social life

Your brain loves company! Getting together with family and friends is a great way to stimulate your brain. Try combining a challenge and socializing by playing games together.

#### Get your numbers

Diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, and obesity are all risk factors for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Healthy food choices, exercising and getting enough rest are all important to maintaining your brain health.

#### Exercise

Exercise is a great way to keep your body and your brain healthy. Your brain is an oxygen expensive organ, and exercise is one of the best ways to "feed" your brain the blood and oxygen it needs. If you have concerns, check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.