

We all forget things, need more time to recall a name or mix up our words from time to time as we age. However, if these changes begin to affect daily functioning, they may be a sign of dementia and should be discussed with a health-care provider. Early diagnosis is essential so that a person can access the right support and make informed plans for the future.

The term “dementia” doesn’t refer to one specific disease, rather, it’s an overall term for a set of symptoms that are caused by several different disorders affecting the brain. While Alzheimer’s disease is the most common type of dementia diagnosed by clinicians, there are other types as well, such as those listed below.

This document provides a brief overview of the most common types of dementia, listed from most to least common. To learn more, visit alzbc.org/other-types-dementia

Dementia types	Key features	Common symptoms	Risk factors
Alzheimer's disease  Typical age of diagnosis: Mid 60s and above	- A chronic, progressive neurodegenerative disease that destroys brain cells leading to changes in cognitive abilities that interferes with daily life. - Involves an abnormal build-up of protein deposits outside brain cells (plaques) and inside cells (tangles).	- This disease causes changes in memory, thinking, mood, communication and behaviour. - Each person is affected differently. It's difficult to predict symptoms, the order in which they will appear or the speed of their progression.	- Risk factors you can't control include age, gender and genetics. - Risk factors you have some control over include vision loss, physical inactivity, diabetes, smoking, hearing loss, high cholesterol, hypertension and social isolation¹.
Vascular dementia  Typical age of diagnosis: Over 65	Occurs when the blood supply to the brain is blocked or damaged, causing brain cells to be deprived of oxygen and die.	- Symptoms vary widely depending on where and how severely blood vessels are damaged; they may develop gradually over time, or begin more suddenly, for example after a stroke. - Changes in thinking and movement, including decision-making, confusion, difficulty speaking and poor balance.	Include stroke, covert stroke, mini-strokes (transient ischemic attacks or TIAs) and high blood pressure (or hypertension).
Lewy body dementia  Typical age of diagnosis: ² Over 65	- Lewy body dementia is an umbrella term that encompasses dementia with Lewy bodies and Parkinson's disease dementia. - Occurs because of abnormal deposits of protein called alpha-synuclein (known as Lewy bodies) that develop inside the brain's nerve cells.	- Changes include loss of memory, language, reasoning and other higher cognitive functions, such as the ability to calculate numbers. Changes in motor symptoms (movement) can also occur. - Memory loss may not occur in the early stages. Difficulties with planning, organization, attention and alertness may be some of the first symptoms experienced, as well as changes to visual-spatial perception.	- Parkinson's disease. - You may have higher risk if you have a family member with Lewy body dementia.
Frontotemporal dementia  Typical age of diagnosis: Under 65	Frontotemporal dementia (FTD) is an umbrella term for a group of rare disorders that affect areas of brain associated with personality, behaviour and language.	- FTD can cause behaviour changes, memory loss and difficulties with speech and movement. - Memory loss is not of concern in early stages.	- About one-third of FTD occurrences are inherited. - FTD is most common cause of dementia in people younger than 60.



Mixed dementia

Mixed dementia occurs when a person has more than one type of dementia at the same time. Most often, it involves a combination of Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia. A person living with mixed dementia will experience symptoms of at least two types of dementia, which can lead to a greater overall impact on their brain. Risk factors and typical age of diagnosis depend on the specific causes of dementia.

Research indicates that mixed dementia is very common, not just for those diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease but also for those diagnosed with other types of dementia.³

5%

of British Columbians living with dementia are living with younger-onset dementia.



Younger onset dementia (YOD)

Refers to someone developing symptoms of dementia between the ages of 18 to 64. In 2022, an estimated five per cent of people in BC living with dementia are living with younger-onset dementia.⁴

The two most common causes of YOD are Alzheimer's disease and frontotemporal dementia⁵.

Rarer forms of dementia

Some people may develop less common types of neurodegeneration, referred to as "rare dementia". These can include primary progressive aphasia and posterior cortical atrophy. This represents about five per cent of all dementia cases.



Whether you want to learn more about the programs and services we offer, or find dementia-related information specific to your needs, the Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon has the education and resources to help you.

Visit alzheimerbcyukon.org or call 1-800-936-6033 to reach the First Link® Dementia Helpline.

¹ Livingston, G., Huntley, J., Liu, K. Y., Costafreda, S. G., Selbaek, G., Alladi, S., Ames, D., Banerjee, S., Burns, A., Brayne, C., Fox, N. C., Ferri, C. P., Gitlin, L. N., Howard, R., Kales, H. C., Kivimäki, M., Larson, E. B., Nakasujja, N., Rockwood, K., Samus, Q., ... Mukadam, N. (2024). Dementia prevention, intervention, and care: 2024 report of the Lancet standing Commission. *Lancet* (London, England), 404(10452), 572–628. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(24\)01296-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(24)01296-0)

² Rare Dementia Support Canada. Lewy body dementia. <https://raredementiasupport.ca/rare-or-young-onset-dementia/lewy-body-dementia/>

³ 2024 Alzheimer's disease facts and figures. *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, 20: 3708-3821. <https://doi.org/10.1002/alz.13809>

⁴ Alzheimer Society of B.C. (2022). Provincial findings from the Landmark Study Volume 2 [unpublished internal report]. Alzheimer Society of B.C.

⁵ Alzheimer Society of Canada. (2024). The Landmark Study Report 2: The Many Faces of Dementia in Canada https://alzheimer.ca/sites/default/files/documents/ASC_The%20Many%20Faces%20of%20Dementia%20In%20Canada_Landmark%20Study_Vol2.pdf