

When the female brain incurs dementia

Alzheimer's and dementia are now the **third leading cause of death for women**, after heart disease and stroke according to both British and US health monitors.

Many women transitioning through menopause fear the onset when they start to encounter difficulties with memory and finding words. A decrease in estrogen can explain initial problems but research suggests a complex estrogen relationship to dementia that is still being studied.

What exactly is dementia?

Dementia itself is not a disease but rather a non-specific brain condition that may be caused by various brain disorders. To confuse the matter, dementia can also be caused by disease or injury. The two most common disease based causes are Alzheimer's and strokes. In either case, everyday mental intelligence becomes progressively impaired to the point of affecting daily activities, relationships and self-care.

Brain Skills Affected by Dementia

- Memory
- Language
- Problem solving
- Reasoning and judgment
- Attention

Dementia Symptoms

The symptoms most closely identified with dementia are memory loss, behavioral and personality changes (including emotions of fear, anxiety, agitation and delusions) and increased difficulty in reading writing and verbal communication. Dementia increases with aging among the elderly but may also appear in younger adults.

Dementia Diagnosis

A dementia diagnosis requires at least two deficit cognitive skills to be significantly impaired. Although some form of memory loss may be the first to be noticed, memory loss by itself does not qualify.

Screening and exams are usually conducted by specialists – geriatric internists, geriatric psychiatrists, neurologists, neuropsychologists or geropsychologists. However, other aspects such as educational level, socio-economic level and cultural background may also be influencing factors along with current mental and physical health.

Dementia Treatment

Dementia currently has no known cure. Treatments to slow progression include cholinesterase inhibitors, cognitive, behavioral and music therapies. Those who are bi-lingual speakers have been shown to delay dementia by up to four years. In addition, there is new research on how nutrition may be affecting the negative and positive aspects of dementia.

No one wants to contemplate the possibility of dementia later in life. But, **since female brains are living longer than male brains**, we need to be aware and take the best care of our female brains as possible.