

## Signs and Symptoms of dementia.

There are many forms of dementia and the main symptom is impairment of higher cognitive skills – memory, thinking, comprehension, learning and judgement. There is no cure for dementia. Over time, the person who is affected will lose capacity for speech and comprehension and struggle with basic psychomotor skills e.g. ability to walk, to chew food and to swallow so they will need help with things like eating and using the toilet (Jenkins et al, 2016).

Family members or caregivers may notice that tasks that were previously easy become increasingly difficult or that the ability to name familiar objects and people becomes impaired. Strategies like making lists or leaving reminders as memory cues become less effective. Getting lost on familiar routes and misplacing items may happen with increasing frequency as the disease progresses, while tasks required for self-care may also be affected e.g. ability to prepare food, choose clothing or cope with changing circumstances (Alzheimer's Society UK).

People with dementia are at particularly high risk of falls, delirium (see article 3 of this series) and/or dehydration. Forgetfulness, poor concentration and confusion may arise when someone with dementia is admitted to a hospital ward, leading to feelings of anxiety, confusion, insecurity, agitation or aggression.

Difficulty with everyday activities including hygiene and nutrition or inability to cope with the environment can make people with dementia feel fearful and insecure while tearfulness, anger, hallucinations and/or delusions can pose potential threats to the person's well-being. Emotional lability means that family carers may need to play a more prominent role in support and decision-making related to medical treatment and care.