

Overview

Frontotemporal dementia

- Overview
- [Treatment](#)
- [Symptoms](#)

Dementia is caused by different diseases of the brain. Frontotemporal dementia is a type of dementia. It is not common.

Frontotemporal dementia causes problems with behaviour and language.

It affects the front and sides of your brain. These are known as the frontal and temporal lobes.

Dementia mainly affects people age 65 and older. But frontotemporal dementia often starts between ages 45 and 65. It can also affect younger or older people.

Symptoms of frontotemporal dementia

Symptoms of frontotemporal dementia get worse over time, usually over years.

Symptoms can include:

- personality and behavioural changes - such as acting inappropriately, appearing selfish or changes in eating behaviour
- language problems - such as using words incorrectly
- problems with mental abilities - such as getting distracted easily
- memory problems - usually happen in later stages of the disease
- physical problems - such as stiff movements or muscle weakness

You may eventually be unable to look after yourself.

[Symptoms of frontotemporal dementia](#)

Contact your GP if:

- you think you have early symptoms of dementia

Your GP can do some checks to try to find the cause of your symptoms. They will refer you to a memory clinic or another specialist for further tests if needed.

If you're worried about someone else, encourage them to see their GP. You could suggest going with them.

Causes of frontotemporal dementia

Frontotemporal dementia is caused by clumps of abnormal protein forming inside brain cells. These are thought to damage the cells and stop them working properly.

The proteins mainly build up in the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain at the front and sides. These are important for controlling language, behaviour, and the ability to plan and organise.

It's not understood why this build-up happens but there's often a genetic link with frontotemporal dementia. About 1 in 8 people who get it have relatives who were also affected by the condition.

Diagnosing frontotemporal dementia

There's no single test for frontotemporal dementia.

You will usually have different tests and assessments to diagnose or rule out frontotemporal dementia.

Assessment of symptoms

It's helpful to have somebody who knows you well to give an account of your symptoms. This is because someone with frontotemporal dementia may not be aware of changes in their behaviour.

Assessment of mental abilities

This will usually involve a number of tasks and questions.

Blood tests

These are used to rule out conditions with similar symptoms.

Brain scans

An MRI scan, a CT scan or a PET scan can detect signs of dementia. They can help identify which parts of your brain are most affected, or help rule out other problems with your brain.

Lumbar puncture

A lumbar puncture tests the spinal fluid (fluid that surrounds and supports the brain and spine). This may be useful to rule out Alzheimer's disease.

Treatment for frontotemporal dementia

There's no cure for frontotemporal dementia or any treatment that will slow it down.

But there are treatments that can help control some of the symptoms, possibly for years.

Treatments include:

- medicines - to control some of the behavioural problems
- therapies - such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy
- support groups - who can offer tips on managing symptoms

[Treatment for frontotemporal dementia](#)

Outlook for frontotemporal dementia

How quickly frontotemporal dementia gets worse varies from person to person. It is very difficult to predict.

People with the disease can become socially isolated as the illness progresses. They may not want to spend time in the company of others, or may behave in rude ways.

Most people will need home-based help at some stage. Some people will eventually need care in a nursing home. You or your family may need help to access nursing home care. A social worker can help you with this process.

The average survival time after symptoms start is 8 to 10 years. But some people live much longer than this.

Support

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with dementia, remember you're not alone. There are supports in your community that can help you live with dementia.

These include:

- [Understand Together](#)
- [Alzheimer Society of Ireland](#)
- dementia social clubs
- [Irish Dementia Café Network](#)
- [dementia advisers service](#)
- day centres
- respite care
- [memory and technology resource rooms](#)

Sláintecare.

This project has received funding from the Government of Ireland's Sláintecare Integration Fund 2019 under Grant Agreement Number 123.

Page last reviewed: 2 October 2024

Next review due: 2 October 2027

HSE Live - we're here to help

Monday to Friday: 8am to 8pm

Saturday: 9am to 5pm

Sunday: Closed

Bank holidays: Closed

Freephone: [1800 700 700](tel:1800700700)

From outside Ireland: [00 353 1 240 8787](tel:0035312408787)

[HSE Facebook](#)

[HSE Instagram](#)

[HSE TikTok](#)

[HSE YouTube](#)

[HSE LinkedIn](#)

[HSE X \(Twitter\)](#)

[Complaints and feedback](#)

[Emergencies](#)

[Cookie settings](#)

[Cookie statement](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy statement](#)

[Disclaimer](#)

© Health Service Executive