

Overview

Vascular dementia

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Dementia is caused by different diseases of the brain. These diseases affect the parts of the brain that are used for learning, memory and language.

Vascular dementia is a common type of dementia caused by reduced blood flow to the brain.

Vascular dementia usually gets worse over time. But it may be possible to slow down the progression of symptoms.

Vascular dementia is more common in people age 65 or older. Many people with vascular dementia also have Alzheimer's disease.

Symptoms of vascular dementia

Symptoms of vascular dementia can appear suddenly or slowly over time.

Symptoms include a slower thought process and problems concentrating.

These problems can make daily activities more difficult over time. Someone with the condition may eventually lose the ability to look after themselves.

[Symptoms of vascular dementia](#)

Contact your GP if:

- you think you have early symptoms of dementia - such as memory problems and slow thinking

It is important to start treatment early. Treatment may be able to slow down its progression.

If you're worried about someone who may have dementia, encourage them to see their GP. Offer to go

to the appointment with them.

What your GP can do to help

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

Diagnosing vascular dementia

Your doctor will ask about your symptoms and medical history.

They may recommend tests such as:

- an assessment of mental abilities - this usually involves several tasks and questions
- a brain scan, such as an MRI scan or CT scan, to look for any changes in your brain

Treatments for vascular dementia

There is no cure for vascular dementia. There is also no way to reverse any damage done to brain tissue. But treatment may help to slow down the progression of the disease.

Treatment aims to tackle the underlying cause and manage [risk factors for the disease](#). This may reduce the speed at which the disease progresses.

Some treatments involve lifestyle changes and medicine to manage risk factors. Other treatments aim to manage symptoms and make it easier to live with vascular dementia.

[Treating vascular dementia](#)

[Information and advice about vascular dementia - understandtogether.ie](#)

Outlook for vascular dementia

Vascular dementia usually gets worse over time. This can happen in sudden steps, with periods in between where the symptoms do not change much.

Symptoms of progression can include deterioration in:

- concentration
- memory
- speed of thinking
- communication

Most people need some home-based help. Some people will eventually need care in a nursing home.

Treatment can help. But vascular dementia often reduces life expectancy. This can vary from person to person.

Support is available from:

- [Alzheimer Society of Ireland - alzheimer.ie](https://www.alzheimer.ie)
- [Dementia supports and services in your area - understandtogether.ie](https://www.understandtogether.ie)

Causes of vascular dementia

Vascular dementia is caused by reduced blood flow to the brain. This damages and eventually kills brain cells. Reduced blood flow can happen if the blood vessels in the brain are damaged.

Sometimes vascular dementia can be linked to an underlying condition such as high blood pressure or [diabetes](#).

Treating underlying conditions may reduce your risk of vascular dementia in later life. But it's not yet clear exactly how much your risk of dementia can be reduced.

[Causes of vascular dementia](#)

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