

Understanding the Differences Between Dementia and Depression

Troubled by the early warning signs of dementia? First rule out that it is not depression. To receive proper diagnosis and care, it is critical to ensure that the symptoms are from dementia and not depression.

Dementia is a brain disorder.

Depression is a mood disorder.



Is it Dementia or Depression?

Symptoms of Dementia

- Mental decline happens slowly
- Confused and disoriented; becomes lost in familiar locations
- Difficulty with short-term memory
- Writing, speaking and motor skills are impaired
- Doesn't notice memory problems or seem to care

Symptoms of Depression

- Mental decline is relatively rapid
- Knows the correct time, date, and where he or she is
- Difficulty concentrating
- Language and motor skills are slow, but normal
- Notices or worries about memory problems

Memory Screening Questions

Memory screenings make sense for anyone concerned for themselves or others about memory loss or who are experiencing warning signs of dementia (see below), as well as those who believe they are at risk due to a family history of Alzheimer's disease or a related illness.

These questions might help. If the answer is "yes" to any of them, a memory screening might be helpful.

- Yes No Am I becoming more forgetful?
- Yes No Do I have trouble concentrating?
- Yes No Do I have difficulty performing familiar tasks?

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- Yes No Do I have trouble recalling words or names in conversation?
- Yes No Do I sometimes forget where I am?
- Yes No Have family or friends told me that I am repeating questions or saying the same thing over and over again?
- Yes No Am I misplacing things more often?
- Yes No Have I become lost when walking or driving in a familiar neighborhood?
- Yes No Have my family or friends noticed changes in my mood, behavior, personality, or desire to do things?

Note: A memory screening is not used to diagnose any particular illness and does not replace consultation with a qualified physician or other healthcare professional. Sometimes a memory screening is beneficial to establish a baseline.

Warning Signs of Dementia:

- Trouble with new memories
- Trouble finding words
- Confusion about time, place or people
- Onset of new depression or irritability
- Personality changes
- Seeing or hearing things
- Relying on memory helpers
- Struggling to complete familiar actions
- Misplacing familiar objects
- Making bad decisions
- Loss of interest in important responsibilities
- Expressing false beliefs