

# Dementia in aged Indian population

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## Introduction

India is known for its diverse culture, rich heritage, and a large population. However, with progress comes the downside – an aging population that is more prone to chronic diseases like dementia. Dementia affects millions of people worldwide and can leave families feeling helpless while taking a toll on their loved ones' mental health. In this blog post, we'll shed light on dementia in the Indian aged population by exploring what it is, how it affects individuals and societies; and what we can do as a community to combat this growing health concern.



## Prevalence of dementia in India

India has the second largest population of elderly people in the world. It is projected that by 2050, one in every five Indians will be 60 years or older. Given the large number of older adults in India, the prevalence of dementia is a major public health concern.

Although there are no recent national estimates of the prevalence of dementia in India, a study from Kerala found that the prevalence was 6.4%. This study also found that the prevalence of dementia increased with age, and was higher in women than men. Another study from Delhi found that the prevalence of dementia was 7.5%. This study also found that the prevalence of dementia increased with age, and was higher in women than men.

It is clear from these studies that the prevalence of dementia is a major problem in India. The large number of older adults in India means that there are many people affected by this condition. The high rates of dementia among older adults highlights the need for more research on this topic, as well as more support for those affected by it.

## Types of dementia

There are many types of dementia, with Alzheimer's disease being the most common. Other types include Lewy body dementia, frontotemporal dementia and vascular dementia.

Dementia is a broad term used to describe a deterioration in cognitive function. It can be caused by a variety of conditions, but the most common form is Alzheimer's disease.

Lewy body dementia is another common type of dementia. It is characterised by a build-up of protein deposits in the brain called Lewy bodies. This can lead to problems with thinking, movement and behaviour.

Frontotemporal dementia is another type of dementia that affects the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain. This can lead to changes in personality and behaviour, as well as problems with language and decision-making.

Vascular dementia is caused by damage to the blood vessels supplying the brain. This can lead to problems with thinking, movement and behaviour.

### **Risk factors for dementia in India**

The highest risk factor for dementia in India is age. The majority of people with dementia are over the age of 65. Other risk factors include:

- Family history. Having a close relative with dementia increases your risk.
- Exposure to toxins. People who have been exposed to certain toxins, such as pesticides and lead, have a higher risk of developing dementia.
- Head injuries. Traumatic brain injuries can increase your risk of later developing dementia.
- Depression. Depression is a Risk Factor for Dementia, study finds
- Diabetes. Diabetes may more than double the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, according to new research published in The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology journal.

### **Symptoms of dementia**



Dementia is a progressive neurological disorder that leads to decline in cognitive function and memory. The symptoms of dementia can be divided into three categories: changes in mood and behavior, changes in language and communication, and changes in physical abilities.

Mood and behavior changes are common in early-stage dementia and can include depression, anxiety, irritability, apathy, and sleep disturbances. As the disease progresses, patients may experience delusions, hallucinations, aggression, and other abnormal behaviors.

Language and communication problems are also common in dementia. Patients may have trouble finding the right words to express themselves or understanding what others are saying. They may also speak more slowly or have difficulty reading and writing.

Changes in physical abilities are often one of the first signs of dementia. Patients may have trouble with balance and coordination or suffer from muscle weakness. Later on, they may lose the ability to walk or stand up.

### **Diagnosis of dementia**

The diagnosis of dementia can be done through a variety of methods. The most common method is through cognitive testing, which can assess memory, attention, language, and executive functioning. However, other methods such as brain imaging (e.g. MRI or CT scan) and blood tests may also be used to rule out other causes of cognitive decline. In addition, it is important to obtain a detailed history from the individual and their family in order to determine if there is a pattern of decline that is typical of dementia.

### **Treatment and care for people with dementia in India**

There are many different types of dementia, and the symptoms can vary from person to person. It is important to get a diagnosis as soon as possible so that the right treatment and care can be provided.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to treating and caring for people with dementia, but there are some general principles that can be followed. The first step is to ensure that the person with dementia feels safe and comfortable. This may involve making changes to their home environment, such as removing trip hazards or providing 24-hour supervision.

The second step is to provide support for the person's caregivers. This may include respite care, counselling, or training in how to manage difficult behaviours.

The third step is to maximise the person's independence and involvement in activities. This may involve providing items such as adapted utensils or memory aids, as well as opportunities for socialisation and stimulation through activities such as music therapy or art classes.

Finally, it is important to keep the person's end-of-life wishes in mind and make sure they are respected. This may involve Advance Care Planning so that their preferences for care and treatment are known in advance.

### **Prevention of dementia**

As the population in India ages, the number of people with dementia is expected to increase. There are some things that can be done to help prevent or delay the onset of dementia.

One of the best things that can be done for cognitive health is to maintain healthy lifestyle habits. Eating a healthy diet, getting regular exercise, and keeping mentally active can all help to keep the brain healthy and reduce the risk of developing dementia.

There is also some evidence that certain supplements may help to prevent or delay dementia. These include omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin B12, and folic acid. Discussing with a doctor whether these supplements could be right for you is a good idea.

Finally, staying socially connected and engaged with life can also help to reduce the risk of developing dementia. Isolation and loneliness are thought to be risk factors for cognitive decline, so staying socially active can help keep the brain healthy.

### **Conclusion**

Dementia is a growing health concern among India's aging population. The increasing prevalence of dementia in India has led to the need for better diagnosis, treatment, and care resources for people living with this condition. With early detection and access to proper medical care, it may be possible to mitigate some of the effects of dementia. Additionally, improved lifestyle habits such as exercise and healthy diet can help reduce one's risk for developing dementia later in life. Therefore taking proactive steps now can have long-term benefits towards maintaining good brain health and quality of life in Indian elderly individuals.

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