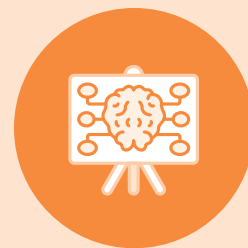


Parkinson's Disease and Dementia:

Top Myths and Misconceptions



For many people with Parkinson's and their families, dementia is one of the most concerning potential symptoms of disease. But not everyone with the disease will experience dementia or milder cognitive changes. And yet, misconceptions are widespread.

With the facts, you and your family can understand more about dementia in Parkinson's, open a dialogue and dispel stigma.

Myth #1

Dementia only causes memory loss

Memory loss is the telltale sign of Alzheimer's. But dementia affects other parts of the brain too, causing thinking problems (such as difficulty multitasking or making decisions), communication challenges (trouble organizing and expressing one's thoughts clearly), and mood and behavior changes. In Lewy body dementia, changes in thinking, attention or visuospatial skills can be the first and most significant symptoms of dementia.

Myth #2

All dementia is Alzheimer's

There are many different types of dementia. Because Alzheimer's is the most common cause, many people think it's the only one. But there are many others. Lewy body dementia is the second most common cause of neurodegenerative (progressive) dementia. Other conditions, such as strokes or blood vessel (vascular disease and vitamin deficiencies, also can cause dementia.

Myth #3

Dementia is a normal part of aging

Some changes in memory and thinking are normal with aging. But severe memory loss or thinking problems that make it impossible to do daily activities or live alone are not an expected part of life.

Myth #4

There is a test to diagnose dementia

Doctors diagnose dementia based on a person's symptoms and physical examination, as well as an assessment of thinking and memory skills. They may perform blood or spinal fluid tests or brain scans to look for other conditions that can cause dementia symptoms. On their own, though, these tests cannot conclusively diagnose dementia. (At this time, the only way to definitively diagnose dementia is to look at the brain at autopsy.) Researchers are actively searching for ways to objectively diagnose and track dementia.

Myth #5

Dementia does not have a treatment

There are many treatments and strategies to ease symptoms and limit the impact of dementia on a person's life. But no therapy has yet been proven to slow or stop the progression of dementia.



For blogs and videos on the latest in Parkinson's research and care, visit michaeljfox.org/cognitionguide

The medical information contained in this article is for general information purposes only. The Michael J. Fox Foundation has a policy of refraining from advocating, endorsing or promoting any drug therapy, course of treatment, or specific company or institution. It is crucial that care and treatment decisions related to Parkinson's disease and any other medical condition be made in consultation with a physician or other qualified medical professional.