

### **Pre-clinical Dementia**

The stage of preclinical dementia precedes mild cognitive impairment (MCI) and includes both people for whom changes have started in the brain but who are clinically indistinguishable from the profile of normal or “typical” aging, as well as individuals from their own baseline that exceeds that expected in typical aging, but would not yet meet criteria for MCI. Changes in the brain are quite subtle.

If we can get in early when dementia is pre-clinical, we are much more likely to be effective in our treatment.

### **Alzheimer’s Disease**

People who have mild cognitive impairment, research suggests, are more likely to go on and experience Alzheimer’s disease or another dementia disease.

- Memory loss that disrupts daily life
- Difficulties planning or solving problems; may forget how to plan a route from home to the shopping centre, or simple tasks that they used to do.
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work, or at leisure. For example, they may have done woodwork previously, but can now no longer recognise a chisel or remember what a chisel is for.
- Confusion with time or place. Don’t have the same understanding of how long an hour is, or a day. May not recognise their own home, or experience confusion that makes them feel unsafe.
- Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships. May not recognise the relationship between car and car keys, for example.
- New problems with words in speaking or writing. May not make sense, may not have much connection between their words.
- Decreased or poor judgement
- Withdrawal from work or social activities
- Changes in mood and personality. Understandable if nothing seems familiar or safe.

### **Stages of Decline**

Commonly classified into 3 stages;

- Early Dementia: when people are still trying to work out if it’s really dementia. Other things could produce the same symptoms, like stress, illness, or medication. As people age, they tend to have more medications that they’re using, and those may have other health implications that manifest of the form of dementia symptomology/ impaired cognition.
- Moderate Dementia: more advanced and there is no mistaking when that occurs.
- Advanced Dementia

### **Early**

The problem with dementia is that it usually has a very gradual onset and it is often impossible to identify the exact time it began. Normal aging can include all of the problems listed here as well; the only difference is the severity for the person. So it’s

difficult to pinpoint when the person turned from pre-clinical to MCI. The person may:

- Appear more apathetic, with less sparkle
- Lose interest in hobbies and activities
- Be unwilling to try new things
- Be unable to adapt to change
- Show poor judgement and make poor decisions
- Blame others for “stealing” lost items
- Become more forgetful of details of recent events
- Be likely to repeat themselves
- Be more irritable or upset
- Have difficulty handling in money

### Moderate

At this stage the problems are more apparent and disabling. At this point, the person may need a carer. They will need to have someone to make sure they're coping with the task of daily living, and make sure that they are safe and don't hurt themselves. It is easy for people to take advantage on individuals in this position. It is somewhere around here that the decision has to be made regarding whether we keep people in their home environment or if we move them into care. The person may:

- Be more forgetful of recent events. Memory for the distant past generally seems better, but some details may be forgotten