

Vascular Dementia

What is vascular dementia?

Vascular dementia is a decline in thinking skills caused by conditions that block or reduce blood flow to various regions of the brain, depriving them of oxygen and nutrients. Vascular dementia is considered the second most common cause of dementia after Alzheimer's disease, accounting for up to 30% of cases.

What are the causes of vascular dementia?

Any condition that damages blood vessels anywhere in the body can cause brain changes linked to vascular dementia. Advancing age is a major risk factor.

Additional risk factors are the same ones that raise risk for heart problems, stroke, and other diseases that affect blood vessels. Follow these steps to reduce the risk of developing vascular dementia:

- Don't smoke
- Keep a healthy blood pressure, cholesterol level, and blood sugar
- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Limit alcohol consumption

What are the symptoms of vascular dementia?

A person with vascular dementia may experience:

- Confusion
- Trouble paying attention and concentrating
- Reduced ability to organize thoughts
- Problems with memory
- Restlessness and agitation

- Depression

How is vascular dementia diagnosed?

Sometimes vascular dementia is difficult to distinguish from Alzheimer's disease. In many cases, a person may have both vascular dementia and Alzheimer's disease. This is referred to as mixed dementia or Alzheimer's disease with stroke (or mini-strokes).

What are the prognosis and options for treatment?

Unfortunately, there are no treatments that can reverse the damage that has been done to the brain after it has occurred. However, physical therapy can help people recover immediately after a stroke. Medications and lifestyle changes can help prevent additional strokes.

Medications used to treat Alzheimer's disease may also be helpful with vascular dementia.

Where can I learn more?

More information about vascular dementia can be found at:

- The Alzheimer's Association
www.alz.org or by calling (800) 272-3900
- The National Institute on Aging
www.nia.nih.gov or by calling (800) 438-4380

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by UMHS and for which UMHS does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](http://www.umhs.org) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/). Last Revised 3/2016