

What is Dementia?

Many people in the past believed that memory loss was a normal, natural part of aging. However, experts now realize that severe memory loss, or memory loss that interferes with everyday life, is a symptom of a serious illness called “dementia”.

Dementia is a broad term for several symptoms related to a decline in thinking skills. Common symptoms include a gradual loss of memory (especially for recent events or information), problems with reasoning or judgment, disorientation to place and time, difficulty in learning, loss of language skills, and decline in the ability to perform routine tasks.

People with dementia may also show changes in their personality and behavior, such as agitation, anxiety, delusions (believing in a reality that does not exist), and hallucinations (seeing things that are not really there).

There are many causes of dementia, but the most common cause is Alzheimer’s Disease. Other causes include stroke, traumatic brain injury, brain tumors, HIV, Parkinson’s Disease, and vitamin deficiencies.

Warning Signs

Some of the most common symptoms of dementia include:

- forgetting recent events, conversations, and names of friends or relatives
- repeating questions
- misplacing possessions
- frequently being at a loss for words
- confusing sense of direction/time
- difficulty performing chores or using appliances and tools
- difficulty handling finances
- changes in mood/personality



If you recognize any warning signs in yourself or a loved one, we recommend that you contact a memory disorder clinic near you for an

evaluation. Unfortunately, many people put off a memory evaluation until their symptoms are severe. One of the most important steps to getting appropriate treatment, care, and support services is early assessment and diagnosis.

Memory Disorder Clinics

The State of Florida currently funds 13 Memory Disorder Clinics. These clinics provide assessment, diagnosis, and treatment to persons with symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease and related memory disorders. They can identify treatable and reversible disorders that look like dementia. They also provide training and referrals for caregivers, respite service providers, and health care professionals who work with persons with dementia. Training topics include: care management strategies, stress reduction methods for caregivers, accessing community resources, and legal and financial issues to help plan for the future.

Where to Find Help

The 13 state-funded Memory Disorder Clinics in Florida are located in the following cities:

- Tampa (813) 974-3100
- Gainseville (352) 392-3491
- Miami (305) 243-4082
- Miami Beach (305) 674-2543
- Pompano Beach (954) 786-7392
- West Palm Beach (561) 882-6363
- Melbourne (321) 768-9575
- Jacksonville (904) 953-7103
- Pensacola (850) 494-6498
- Tallahassee (850) 431-5038
- Orlando (407) 843-7878
- Fort Myers (239) 334-5768
- Sarasota (941) 917-7197

Each clinic serves the counties that surround it.

Many communities have additional memory disorder clinics that are not state funded. For more information in these clinics in your local area, call the Alzheimer's Association at 800-272-3900.

For more information:

The Florida Association of Area Agency on Aging
<http://www.f4a.org>
Elder Helpline: (800) 963-5337
Eldercare Locator: (800) 677-1116

Florida Department of Elder Affairs
<http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us>
(800) 955-8771 for TDD or
(800) 955-8770 for Voice

State-Funded Memory Disorder Clinics, visit this website:
<http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us/does/english/32053AM/mem.html>

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Florida Commission for the
Transportation
Disadvantaged

Funding for this publication was made possible through a grant from:

The Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged

Center on Aging
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

IS IT NORMAL AGING OR A MEMORY DISORDER?



**Safety Information
For Seniors**

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