



Resources: **Other conditions**

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It may be that the symptoms you or a relative are experiencing are not due to a progressive dementia, but have a completely different, and treatable, cause. Tiredness, stress, emotional upheavals and anxiety can all affect memory in the short term. Conditions that can mimic dementia symptoms include:



Delirium

Delirium or 'acute confusional state' is a serious disturbance in mental abilities, including high levels of confusion, agitation, lack of awareness of surroundings, rambling speech and rapid mood changes. It typically comes on rapidly, unlike dementia which develops slowly over time, and symptoms fluctuate in severity, often being worse at night. A rarer form of hypoactive delirium is characterised by sluggishness, apathy, and appearing in a daze.

Delirium can be caused by infections, in particular of the urinary tract, acute or chronic illnesses, have dietary causes including low sodium or Vitamin B12, or be a reaction to medication. The causes can be treated and reversed, eg with antibiotics or changes in diet.

Depression

Dementia is often misdiagnosed as depression and vice-versa. Common symptoms such as low mood and low self-esteem, a reduced ability to cope with every day pressures and social withdrawal, can be easily confused with early symptoms of dementia.

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Depression, continued...

Depression needs careful management but effective treatment is available in the form of medication and talking therapies.

Research suggests that people with a history of late-onset depression are more likely to develop dementia than the general population. However more research is needed to understand if there is a causal link.

Urinary tract infections

One of the most common causes of delirium or 'acute confusional state'. If an older person, or someone already diagnosed with dementia, is suddenly much more confused than normal, it may well be due to a UTI. They can be easily treated with antibiotics. Women are more prone to UTIs than men.

Menopause

Many women find themselves more forgetful before and during menopause, and changes in sleep patterns and energy levels can cause symptoms that can mimic the early stages of dementia. Researchers are studying how hormonal changes during menopause may be linked to changes in brain function.

Mild Cognitive Impairment

Mild cognitive impairment may be a memory problem, a visual disturbance, a difficulty in retaining information or in maintaining concentration. However the impairment will not be severe enough to impact on every day life, and is not thought to be progressive. Some people with a mild cognitive impairment do later develop dementia, so any decline in mental abilities should be monitored and reviewed.