

# Diagnosis Fact Sheet

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These are some of the tools that physicians may use to help those who are concerned about dementia.

## Evaluation and Diagnosis

- Provide the doctor with a journal about changes over time in your loved one's personality, memory, mental functioning, speech and language problems, and good days and bad days.
- Be sure all family members provide input.
- Several visits may be necessary if your loved one tires easily.
- Follow-up visits track the progression of your loved one's condition over time.
  - The initial diagnosis might be "dementia" until the physician is able to see your loved one's progress over time and be fairly sure whether it is Alzheimer's or one of the other dementias.

**These laboratory tests** can help rule out other disorders, which may look like progressive dementias:

Complete Blood Count	Thyroid functions	HIV – AIDS test
B12 and folic acid levels	Syphilis blood test	Electrolytes
Serum Calcium	Kidney and liver functions	CT brain scan
Chest X-Ray	Medication levels	EKG

Sedimentation Rate – a test for inflammatory conditions such as Lupus

\*At this time, there are no laboratory tests to diagnose any of the progressive dementias.

**Detailed testing by a neuropsychologist** can be used to measure brain function and changes over time, and help distinguish between progressive dementia, mild cognitive impairment (MCI), or other possible causes.

## Care of the Person living with dementia and their family

The physician may be able to:

- Refer families to community resources for education, support, and care coordination (such as Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska).
- Suggest adult day services, respite care/in home care, companions, meals, transport, etc.
- Give attention to associated problems (which may be treated) such as depression, Parkinson's, alcohol or drug abuse, nutritional problems, dehydration, strokes, bedsores, falls, etc.
- Discuss methods of communication.
- Offer suggestions about management of behavioral problems such as wandering, aggression, hiding things, paranoia, etc.
- Suggest changes/modifications to the home environment.
- Refer families to legal and financial information such as guardianship, durable power of attorney, long term care insurance, etc.
- Assist with long term care decisions.

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