

11 Warning Signs of Dementia

Dementia is not a normal part of ageing. Spotting these early signs can make a real difference — for your loved ones and for you.

Over **55 million people** worldwide live with dementia (WHO). Early identification can slow progression and improve quality of life. These signs are not a diagnosis — but if you notice several of them regularly, speak to a doctor.

1



Difficulty Following TV Shows or Storylines

Losing track of a familiar programme or forgetting what just happened — even mid-episode — can be an early indicator of memory and concentration changes.

2



Increased Reliance on Simple Words or Generic Terms

Frequently substituting specific words with vague ones — "that thing" or "whatnot" — when naming everyday objects can reflect word-finding difficulties.

3



Sudden Cravings for Sweet Foods

A marked new preference for sugary foods — especially in someone who was not previously fond of them — has been linked to changes in the frontal lobe associated with early dementia.

4



Difficulty Understanding Depth, Distance, or Stairs

Misjudging the edge of a step, reaching incorrectly for objects, or struggling with shadows and contrasts can result from visuospatial changes in the brain.

5



Repeatedly Losing Track During Conversations

Regularly forgetting what was just said — asking the same question within minutes or drifting off mid-sentence — may indicate short-term memory decline.

6



Becoming Suspicious or Accusing Others Unnecessarily

Unwarranted accusations — for instance, claiming someone stole a misplaced item — can be an early sign of paranoia linked to cognitive decline, not deliberate behaviour.

7



Loss of Interest in Hobbies They Used to Love

Withdrawal from previously enjoyed activities — gardening, reading, socialising — that cannot be explained by physical illness is a notable behavioural change in early dementia.

8



Trouble Using Everyday Technology

Struggling to operate a mobile phone, TV remote, or microwave — devices previously handled with ease — may point to declining executive function and problem-solving ability.

9



Regularly Leaving Things in Unusual Places

Putting keys in the fridge or glasses in the bathroom cabinet — not just once but as a pattern — suggests difficulties with spatial memory and logical sequencing.

10



Walking or Movement Changes

A shuffling gait, increased slowness, reduced arm-swing, or changes in posture can accompany certain types of dementia, particularly Lewy body dementia and vascular dementia.

11



Lowered Realisation That Something Is Amiss

Perhaps the most significant sign: the person experiencing the changes is often unaware of them. This is called *anosognosia* — a neurological lack of insight, not denial.

When should you speak to a doctor?



If you regularly notice 2 or more of these signs in yourself or a loved one — lasting more than a few weeks — consult a neurologist or physician. Early assessment can rule out treatable causes and, where needed, start support sooner. Do not wait for symptoms to worsen on their own.