



Caregiver News Spring 2018

It's Not Always Alzheimer's...

The number one question we answer in Alzheimer's workshops is, "what is the difference between Alzheimer's and dementia?"

The word "dementia" is like the word "food" – it is an umbrella term, and there are many different types. There is no actual disease called "dementia." Dementia is a general term for a decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily life.

There are many diseases that cause dementia, some irreversible and some reversible. It is always good to get a diagnosis to rule out the reversible causes of dementia. These may be depression, metabolic problems (like an underactive thyroid), adverse reactions to medication, infections (like pneumonia), brain tumors, sensory loss, serious nutritional deficiencies (like too little Vitamin B12), alcohol and drug reactions, and dehydration. Differentiating between reversible changes and those that are not requires an evaluation by your doctor or a specialist.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common irreversible dementia illness. Early

symptoms often include short-term memory loss as it first damages the language and memory sections of the hippocampus. As the disease progresses, it continues to destroy neurons in regions of the brain that control other functions as well.

Vascular dementia is the second most common type of dementia. It occurs when the blood supply to the brain is interrupted, such as after a stroke. It causes problems with thinking and planning and is often experienced along with other dementia illnesses.

Dementia with Lewy bodies gets its name from tiny spherical structures that develop inside nerve cells. Symptoms often include fluctuating alertness, hallucinations, tremors, rigidity and problems with movement.

Frontotemporal dementia damage occurs first in the front and sides of the brain. Early symptoms usually involve changes in personality, behavior, social skills or language rather than memory problems.

Creutzfeldt - Jakob disease or CJD is the best known prion disease. Prions are infectious agents that attack the central nervous system and then invade the brain, causing dementia.

Korsakoff's syndrome or Alcohol-Related Brain Damage (ARBD) is a brain disorder usually caused by heavy drinking over a long period. Although it is not strictly speaking a type of dementia, people with the condition experience similar symptoms.

There are many other rarer causes of dementia. If you would like more information, please go to

[National Institute on Aging - Types of Dementia](#)

[Alzheimer Association](#) or call the Alzheimer's Association at **1-800-272-3000**.

People do not realize that Alzheimer's is not old age. It is a progressive and fatal disease and staggering amounts of people develop Alzheimer's every day.

Melina Kanakaredes

Calendar of Workshops for June & July

Effective Communication Strategies

An Alzheimer's Association Program
Tuesday, June 5, 6:00-8:00 pm
Meeting Room
North Country Hospital, Newport

Healthy Living for Your Brain & Body Tips from the Latest Research

An Alzheimer's Association Program
Wednesday, June 13, 6:00-8:00 pm
Memorial Building, 3rd Floor
20 Church St. Hardwick, VT

The Basics – Memory Loss, Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease

An Alzheimer's Association Program
• **Tuesday, June 19, 6:00-8:00pm**
Meeting Room
North Country Hospital, Newport
• **Thursday, July 19, 6:00-8:00pm**
Conference room 126
NVRH, St. Johnsbury

Registration needed for all our caregiver workshops

Call Nancy at 751-0435 or Pam at 751-0427

You can also e-mail info@nekouncil.org. Put "caregivers" in subject line. Thanks!

Make mealtimes easier

- **Limit distractions.**

Serve meals in quiet surroundings, away from the television and other distractions.

- **Keep the table setting simple.**

Avoid placing items on the table — such as table arrangements or plastic fruit — that might distract or confuse the person. Use only the utensils needed for the meal.

- **Distinguish food from the plate.**

Changes in visual and spatial abilities may make it tough for someone with dementia to distinguish food from the plate or the plate from the table. It can help to use white plates or bowls with a contrasting color placemat. Avoid patterned dishes, tablecloths and placemats.

- **Serve only one or two foods at a time.**
Too many foods at once may be overwhelming. Simplify by serving one dish at a time. For example, mashed potatoes followed by meat.
- **Be flexible to food preferences.**
Keep long-standing personal preferences in mind when preparing food, and be aware that a person with dementia may suddenly develop new food preferences or reject foods that were liked in the past.
- **Eat together.**
Make meals an enjoyable social event so everyone looks forward to the experience. Research suggests that people eat better when they are in the company of others.
- **Keep in mind the person may not remember when or if he or she ate.**
If the person continues to ask about eating breakfast, consider serving several breakfasts — juice, followed by toast, followed by cereal.

SAINT JOHNSBURY

481 Summer St., Suite 101
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819
Phone: 802-748-5182

NEWPORT

Derby Time Square Shopping Plaza
5452 US RT 5, Suite. A
Newport, VT 05855
Phone: 802-334-2190

ISLAND POND and HARDWICK

Northern Counties Health Care
hosts us once a week at its offices
in these two communities.

Call for an appointment:

800-642-5119

Visit us at:

www.NEKCouncil.org

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FACEBOOK

On-Going Groups for Caregivers

Alzheimer's Support

NVRH Rm. 224, St. Johnsbury:

Last Monday of each month @ 6 PM
Call Pam or Nancy at 748-5182

NCH Rm. 220, Newport:

4th Tuesday, @ 6:30 PM
Call Suzi: 673-9499

24/7 Phone Support

Alzheimer's Association Helpline:
1-800-272-3900

Bereavement Support

St. Johnsbury:

Caledonia Home Health & Hospice
3rd Monday – 6:00 to 7:30 PM

Bereavement Support

Morrisville:

Call Lamoille Home Health & Hospice
802-888-4651 for information

Kinship Care

St. Johnsbury:

First Monday – 5:30 TO 7:00PM
Call Nancy: 751-0435

Parkinson's Support

St Johnsbury at NVRH:

3rd Friday from 10:30 AM to noon

Grandparents 'n Kin Raising "Grand" Kids

N. Country Career Center, Newport
2nd Wednesdays, 5:30-7:30 PM
Contact Sandi at 802-578-9518.

National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI Family Support

NVRH Library, St. Johnsbury:
4th Wednesday – 5:30 PM

Connection Peer Recovery Support St. Johnsbury:

Every Thursday @ 6:30 PM
Universalist/Unitarian Church
802-876-7949

Survivors of Suicide

Newport:

3rd Thursday – 5:30-7:30 PM
100 East Main Street
Call: 802-744-6284

**NORTHEAST KINGDOM
Council on Aging**

481 Summer Street, Ste. 101
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819



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