

As Dementia Progresses: Looking at Moderate to Late Stage Alzheimer's disease

Changes in Memory, Thinking and Function in Dementia

Mild MMSE* score of 23-20	Moderate MMSE* score of 19-10	Advanced MMSE* score of 9-0
Memory & Thinking		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty with short-term Memory • Poor concentration • Poor decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty with short-and-long term memory. • May begin to forget friends and family members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severely impaired memory for recent and past events
Language		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems remembering the right word or name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trouble with expressive and receptive language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to carry on a meaningful conversation
Mood		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May become depressed or socially withdrawn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More easily upset and frustrated • May appear to lack emotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appears withdrawn • Difficult to engage
Function		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty organizing and managing household affairs, such as cleaning, cooking and yard work. • Trouble handling finances • Difficulty initiating activities • Gets lost/mixed-up when driving in familiar places • May be involved in "fender benders" 	Needs help with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dressing • Grooming • Bathing • Bladder and Bowel • Eating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has difficulty interacting/responding to surroundings • Forgets how to walk without help; may lead to eventual loss of body movement • Relies totally on caregivers for daily care • May forget to chew food or swallow • May lose ability to sit up, hold head up and/or smile
<p>*Mini-Mental State Exam (MMSE) is used by health professionals to screen for dementia and determine progressions.</p>		

Common concerns as dementia progresses

Moderate	Advanced
<p>Behaviors appear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suspiciousness, irritability, restlessness, loss of impulse control, agitation, hallucinations, delusions, misperceptions, wandering, poor sleep <p>Communication changes Caregiver stress Safety & vulnerability Placement or not DELIRIUM (sudden confusion)</p>	<p>Behaviors are the voice of the person Risk for falls, infection, skin breakdown Weight loss can occur Swallowing difficulties, aspiration Potential for seizures Increased sleep Preparing for death & dying: hospice Stopping medications Illness and hospitalization → rapid decline</p>

Treatment of symptoms in moderate to advanced dementia

Symptom	Treatment options
Memory & Cognition	<p>Cholinesterase inhibitor (Aricept/donepezil; Razadyne/galantamine; Exelon/rivastigmine)</p> <p>Namenda (memantine)</p>
Mood	<p>SSRIs (Celexa/citalopram; Lexapro/excitalopram; Zolft/sertraline)</p> <p>Avoid benzodiazepines, tricyclics</p> <p>Other: Effexor/venlafaxine; Remeron/mirtazapine</p>
Behavior	<p>Antidepressants (SSRIs)</p> <p>Atypical antipsychotics**: (Seroquel/quetiapine; Risperdal/risperidone; Zyprexa/olanzapine)</p> <p><small>**use with caution due to black box warning; can cause Parkinson like symptoms</small></p> <p>Antiseizure medications: (e.g. Depakote/valproic acid) needs careful monitoring of blood levels</p>
Sleep	<p>Sleep hygiene first</p> <p>Avoid benzodiazepines, antihistamines and PM formulations</p> <p>Medications: (Trazadone; Remeron; Melatonin; atypical antipsychotics)</p>
Pain	<p>Pain management is a must and affects quality of life!</p> <p>Routine acetaminophen (Tylenol) up to 3gms/day is effective;</p> <p>If needed, pain medications should be given routinely v. as needed</p>

Other care issues & solutions:

Issue	Solutions
Weight loss	Keep eating social Offer smaller more frequent meals Provide easy access to (finger food) snacks Add bonus calories whenever possible Use a smaller plate/cup Present one food at a time Weight gains – limit calories Supervision & assistance will be needed!
Falls	Consider a home assessment Regular exercise program Physical and/or Occupational Therapy can help Check footwear Medication awareness Low lighting at night Adaptive equipment as needed
Caregiving	Self-care is a must! Avoid social isolation Learn to ask for & accept help Attend “Planning Ahead” class Look into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adult Day Health Care - In Home Care program (non-medical) - Residential Care - Hospice

*Despite the changes, be open to receive that which will help;
 wisdom of others, their kindness & support.*

*Stay open to the possibilities of growing closeness, wider
 perspective, and deepened meaning.*