

What is Vascular Dementia



Vascular dementia is a type of dementia caused by reduced blood flow to the brain. While most people think of Alzheimer's disease when they hear the word "dementia," vascular dementia is the second most common type of dementia, behind Alzheimer's, and causes similar symptoms. In fact, the two often go hand-in-hand.



Mixed dementia

is a type of dementia that includes Alzheimer's and vascular dementia. Only 5-10% of vascular dementia cases are only vascular dementia. Most cases are mixed dementia.

Multi-infarct dementia

also known as vascular cognitive impairment, is a type of vascular dementia caused by a series of blockages that affect blood flow to a certain area of the brain. These blockages often go undetected until they cause symptoms that affect cognitive function.



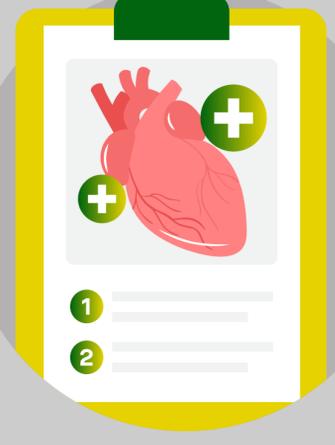
A What causes vascular dementia?

Restricted blood flow to the brain is ultimately what causes vascular dementia, and a number of factors can cause restricted blood flow, including:

- ✓ blood clots
- ✓ atherosclerosis (abnormal aging of blood vessels)
- ✓ high blood pressure
- ✓ stroke
- ✓ infection
- ✓ brain hemorrhage

Genetics can predispose someone to vascular dementia. CADASIL (cerebral autosomal dominant arteriopathy with subcortical infarcts and leukoencephalopathy) is a genetic disorder that affects blood vessels in the brain, causing migraines, seizures, severe depression and, ultimately, vascular dementia.

B Who is at risk for vascular dementia?



Because vascular dementia is caused by restricted blood flow to the brain, anything that affects heart health can put someone at higher risk for developing vascular dementia, including:

- ✓ Obesity
- ✓ History of heart Attacks
- ✓ High blood Pressure
- ✓ Smoking
- ✓ Strokes
- ✓ Atrial fibrillation (Irregularities in The Heart)
- ✓ High cholesterol
- ✓ Diabetes

Aging also puts you at higher risk. From age 65 to 90, the risk for developing vascular dementia greatly increases.

C Can you prevent vascular dementia?



While there is no sure-fire way to ensure you will never get vascular dementia, keeping your heart healthy is the best thing you can do to lower your risk of developing vascular dementia.

You can do this by:

-  **Quit smoking.**
Tobacco damages blood vessels.
-  **Get your blood pressure under control.**
Whether this is through medication or lifestyle changes, making sure you maintain a healthy blood pressure can help prevent vascular dementia and Alzheimer's.
-  **Proper diet.**
With exercise and a proper diet, you can reduce your risk for developing type 2 diabetes, which increases your risk for vascular dementia. If you already have type 2 diabetes, talk to your doctor about how you can keep it in check.
-  **Keep your cholesterol low.**
You can do this through diet or through medication. Talk to your doctor if you have high cholesterol.
-  **Exercise.**
You can do this through diet or through medication. Talk to your doctor if you have high cholesterol.

Because vascular dementia is caused by restricted blood flow to the brain, anything that affects heart health can put someone at higher risk for developing vascular dementia, including:

- ✓ Carotid endarterectomy, angioplasty, and stenting—surgical procedures that increase and improve blood flow to the brain.
- ✓ Maintaining a healthy lifestyle or implementing lifestyle changes such as exercise, eating a healthy diet and quitting smoking.
- ✓ Taking medications that help lower blood pressure, cholesterol and triglycerides.
- ✓ Taking diabetes medication if you have diabetes.
- ✓ Taking medication to help prevent blood clots.

D How is vascular dementia treated?



D How is vascular dementia diagnosed?

If you suspect you or a loved one is showing signs of vascular dementia, call your doctor immediately. He or she will probably refer you to a neurologist who can offer a proper exam and diagnosis.

Vascular dementia can be detected through magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT scan), or through a PET scan. A neurologist can also administer a neuropsychological assessment to determine what type of dementia you might have. You may also receive a neuropsychiatric evaluation to rule out any mental conditions that might be mimicking vascular dementia.

As the second most common type of dementia, know you are not alone if you receive a diagnosis. Vascular dementia is becoming more common and is expected to become even more common in years to come as people live longer with the types of health risks that cause vascular dementia. Talk to your doctor, get an assessment made and establish the best plan of care that will ensure you live the best life you can with vascular dementia.