



Health Notes... Dementia

‘Dementia’ refers to a group of medical disorders caused by impairment of brain function for which the defining symptoms are cognitive: problems with memory, thinking, planning, judgment, language, awareness of one’s own functioning, and other medical activities. Sometimes the first noticeable signs are changes in social or behavioral functioning.

“Dementia results from damage to the brain, most often by disease processes like Alzheimer’s disease and related disorders, exposure to certain toxins, or as recently highlighted by studies of athletes, playing certain contact sports and survivors of war, by major or repeated brain injury. Clinically important cognitive decline can remain invisible to all but one’s closest family and friends, even if it undermines everyday functioning. It’s the major cause of disability in later life, yet is often a silent partner in health care and community settings until it’s been progressing for several years.” From: <https://bolddementiadetection.org>

It is important to diagnose the mild changes before it creates problems for the individual and their family. Many of us are familiar with the Mini cog—Draw a clock and show a certain time—And remember three unrelated subjects. It is a simple screening test that works if administered by someone who has had Mini-cog training.

Health consequences of Dementia can be: missed new diagnosis, medication errors, unnecessary crisis, accidents/injuries, poor chronic disease control, surgical complications, discontinuity of care, complications of family stress, and preventable hospitalization complications.

Support for Families and Caregivers is essential:

- In Rochester 125 Alive (Rec Center) has physical, social and intellectual opportunities to engage minds and bodies of our communities’ active adults. It’s a preventative health care that sounds enjoyable! 1:30 to 3 pm is an Alzheimer’s Caregiver support group on the 3rd Thursday of each month.
- Catholic Charities is offering a 6 wk. class called Powerful Tools for Caregivers beginning at 10 am February 22 thru March 29, 2023, at Homestead Church, 3004 Hwy. 52 North, Rochester, MN. No charge. For more information call 507-459-6265, Jeanette Mollison, jmollison@ccsomn.org
- Suzy Johnson, Artistic Director for the Community Chorus, Resounding Voices, www.resoundingvoices.org, (507-356-8248) - We welcome individuals with Dementia and various memory issues to join us with a Care partner on Tuesday, beginning February 7th — *(It’s probably not too late!)*
- Elder Network doesn’t have a current program at this time

People living with Dementia are usually aware of some changes in their memory or other mental abilities, but they may underestimate their extent and how much they affect their ability to get things done. They may never mention the problem to their Primary Care Provider and signs of Dementia may not be obvious in regular medical appointments.

“Subjective Cognitive Decline” (SCD) is not the same as Dementia. SCD refers to a person’s own experience of changes in memory or thinking. It can be caused by many different conditions and is much more common than Dementia itself. However, when a person senses a change in their mental function—more forgetfulness, trouble paying attention, distractibility or other symptoms—it’s important to tell a professional about this and follow through with recommended evaluations.