

# WORLD ALZHEIMER'S MONTH (WAM)

A BOOST TO  
DEMENTIA  
AWARENESS  
AND ADVOCACY

In: Active Ageing Consortium Asia Pacific (ACAP) Bulletin, University of Hawai'i, USA, Nov-Dec issue, 2022; 20-22. [www.manoa.hawaii.edu/acap/](http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/acap/)



**Dementia is an enormous public health problem that seriously threatens the world economy.**

Dementia is a broad term used to refer to diseases of the brain that affect brain function. In its early stages, it may mimic changes of normal ageing and thus elude diagnosis. But overtime, people with dementia have difficulty remembering, thinking, judging, communicating, understanding, concentrating, reasoning, perceiving, and performing routine familiar tasks. In the end stages, individuals with dementia become totally dependent for support on care givers.



**Dr. Vinod Kumar**  
President Emeritus,  
Alzheimer's & Related  
Disorders Society of India



World Alzheimer's Day (WAD) was launched on September 21, 1994 to promote dementia awareness. Starting in 2012, Alzheimer Disease International (ADI) declared September as World Alzheimer's Month (WAM).

During WAM, people around the globe raise awareness about and challenge the stigma that persists around Alzheimer's disease and all types of dementia. Many Alzheimer and dementia associations around the world host memory walks, fundraisers, awareness raising activities and campaigns to bring attention to those affected. The 2022 theme was Know Dementia, Know Alzheimer's.



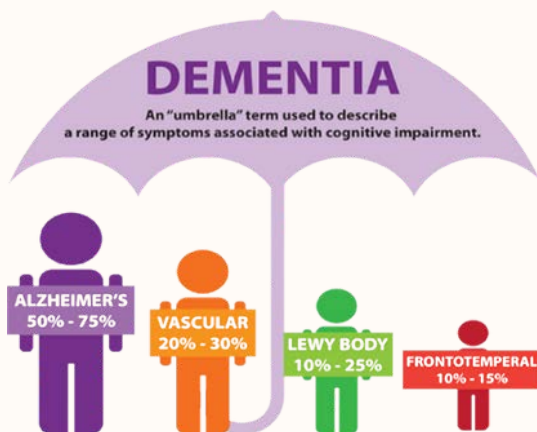


## Age-related cognitive decline versus dementia

Many in old age experience some forgetfulness and slowed attention as a part of normal ageing process, but they are able to perform their activities of daily living (ADLs). Dementia, on the other hand, is a relentlessly progressive pathological entity and is associated with difficulty in carrying out ADLs and premature mortality. Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) is a term that denotes a clinical stage prior to dementia, and about 10-15% of MCI patients progress to dementia.

## Causes of Dementia

Alzheimer's disease is the commonest form of dementia and accounts for 50-75% of cases. Vascular dementia constitutes about 20-30% of cases. Lewy Body dementia and Frontotemporal dementias account for the remaining cases. At this time, there is no cure for Alzheimer's and other diseases that cause dementia.



## Who is at risk of getting dementia?

Age, sex, family history, race and APOE ε4 genotype are dementia risk factors for which we can do nothing. In other words, these are the non-modifiable risk factors.



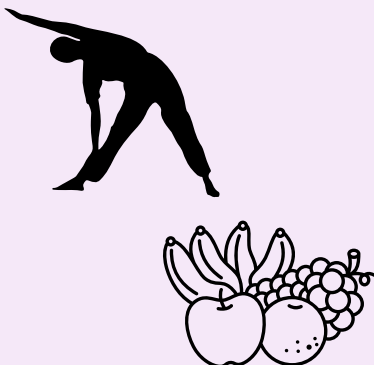
But there are a host of modifiable risk factors, and controlling them forms the backbone of our prevention strategy.

Among the 12 modifiable risk factors for dementia are obesity, physical inactivity, diabetes, high blood pressure, alcohol and tobacco use, depression, and social isolation.

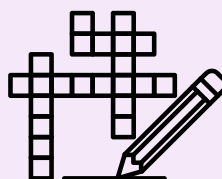
## Prevention and control of dementia

Since there are no effective medicines to cure dementia, non-pharmacological management strategies are important.

For **physical health**, continue to eat healthy food, exercise, keep lifestyle diseases under control, and avoid tobacco and excess alcohol.



For **cognitive health**, continue to challenge the brain by learning new languages, new musical instruments, playing crossword, acrostics or mathematical games, unpacking and assembling newly purchased gadgets, and exploring the internet by online shopping,



For **emotional health**, promote social networking and interaction with family and friends, remain active by attending functions or volunteering, and attend to spiritual health through meditation, yoga, pranayama, and praying.

