5 Surprising Signs of Dementia

Description

Gentle Reader,

Are we showing **signs of demenita**? Traveling with my sister-in-law for a month on ferries, in rental cars and my car; staying in new rooms night after night has resulted in a few missing things, left here and there.

“Our life style is not compatible with our memory issues,” Joan said and we both burst out laughing. We had to make a stop in Friday Harbor on San Juan Island to buy the plug for our cell phones. She is taking pictures with my camera because she didn’t bring her charger for this round of sites. And then there is the misplaced earring.

It wasn’t enough to spend 3 weeks poking around five towns in the Inside Passage of Alaska. We decided to extend our ferry-boat travel to Lopez, San Juan and Victoria with a full afternoon at the Butchard Gardens.



The Sunken gardens at Butchard in Victoria BC

Tonight we are in our beds in the James Bay Hotel, Government St. in Victoria. A half-

moon hangs over head. The lights on the government buildings glittered like Christmas time. The street musicians entertained enthusiastic passers-by and the little harbor taxi spun like a wind-up version of the bumper cars. At Butchard the gardens are transitioning from summer to fall with beds full of chrysanthemums, tight-buds hint lavender, gold, yellow and orange . The zinnia patch is a clown-riot of color. The tuberous begonias and impatience vibrate their more nuanced color palate.



Butchard Gardens,
Victoria,BC

The visit to the gardens began with high panic: I couldn't find my wallet. I put it in a different place in my purse, changing a fixed habit. Dashing nervously back to the car (if you have been to Butchard Gardens you know how far everything is), I was relieved to find it on the floor of the car just inside the door. All was well.

Do we have the early signs of dementia? A few years back, my daughter Grace, who was working with a University of Washington hospice project, asked me to subject myself to a base line test of memory. I did. I passed. Somewhere in my medical records there is an account of my memory capabilities at 70.

This recent report may interest you. We can watch for early signs of dementia and take steps to avoid the full-blown condition.

By **Alysha Reid, Everyday Health Staff Writer**

There’s growing evidence that small changes in the way you walk, chew, sleep, and feel may be subtle early indicators of dementia.

Dementia is characterized by the progressive loss of cognitive functioning as brain cells are destroyed.

But long before you show obvious signs of dementia, certain changes in your behavior could signal that you may have the condition.

One: Trouble Chewing Hard Foods

The act of biting an into apple may predict your odds of developing dementia, according to a study published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (JAGS). Researchers at Karolinska Institutet and Karlstad University in Sweden studied a sample of 577 people aged 77 or older and found that those who had trouble chewing hard food such as apples had a much higher risk of mental decline. The Swedish researchers offered one possible explanation: Since chewing is difficult when you have few or no teeth — which may be the case for some older people — they chew less, which reduces blood flow to the brain and therefore may put you at higher risk for dementia.

Two: Slow Walking

Your walking style could predict your dementia risk, according to a report presented at the 2012 Alzheimer’s Association International Conference. Several studies presented there found a correlation between walking abnormalities and signs of cognitive decline on neuropsychological tests. Another study presented at the conference analyzed the at-home walking behaviors of 19 older subjects using motion-sensor technology. They found those with a slow pace had smaller brain volumes, which is often true of people with dementia.

Three: Trouble Sleeping

More **bad news for night owls**: Your sleep cycle now may lead to dementia later. In a December 2011 study published in *Annals of Neurology*, 1,300 healthy women over the age of 75 were followed over the course of five years. By the end of that time, 39 percent had developed some form of mild cognitive impairment or dementia. Researchers found that women with weaker circadian rhythms(those who performed less physical activity early in the day) were **80 percent more likely to develop mild cognitive impairment or dementia**

than women who were active early in the day.

Four: Carrying Extra Pounds

Being overweight is linked to many health dangers — including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and arthritis. But one study, published in May 2011 in *Neurology*, **linked a high BMI to a higher dementia risk**. In an analysis of 8,534 twins aged 65 and older, it was noted that 350 were officially diagnosed with dementia and 114 with possible dementia. When researchers tracked their BMIs from 30 years earlier, they found that those with dementia or possible dementia now were 70 percent more likely to have been overweight or obese back then.

Worried that your extra weight could lead to cognitive decline later on? The answer may be to**start a workout program**. A July study presented in the Alzheimer's Association International Conference concluded that **exercise may protect the aging brain**.

Five: Being Depressed

Feeling blue isn't only bad for your emotional well-being — depression can take a toll on your brain health, too. A study published in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* evaluated the medical records of more than 13,000 California residents over the course of six years. Those with **late-life depression had double the chance of developing Alzheimer's disease**, while those with both mid-and late-life depression had more than triple the risk of developing vascular dementia.

Dear friends, I hope this can be a little wake-up call for. Not an alarm bell necessarily, but a cautionary suggestion to take a look at some of the creeping behaviors that might be addressed sooner than later.

By all means, to avoid *early signs of dementia,* keep moving! Email me or comment here with your stories about dementia.

For supplements that can help, see resources.

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