

Early Signs of Dementia in People with Down's Syndrome - checklist

People with Down's syndrome are more likely to develop a 'frontal like' dementia prior to developing Alzheimer's disease.

The early signs of dementia

The most common early signs to look out for are changes in:

- Mood
- Behaviour
- Executive function e.g. planning, initiative, problem solving, reasoning
- Personality
- Social skills.

Signs of Alzheimer's disease

If someone begins to display the following behaviours - and this is not how they would normally behave - they may be developing Alzheimer's disease.

- Loss of daily living skills
- Anxiety in unfamiliar places
- Deterioration in short term memory e.g. forgetting what they have said, losing their belongings, asking the same question repeatedly
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Reduced communication
- Difficulty in finding the correct word
- New or increased confusion and/or disorientation
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Difficulties with steps, stairs and kerbs
- Depth perception problems which can leave someone struggling to make sense of what they see in front of them or they can see things that are not really there. For example, the reflected glare from a glossy floor can be perceived as liquid on the floor.
- Increased walking about without a clear reason.

Misdiagnosis can happen

People can be wrongly misdiagnosed because the signs of dementia are the same as those for a number of other treatable conditions e.g.

- Depression
- Lack of sleep
- Urinary tract infection
- Effects of medication
- Thyroid problems
- Untreated pain
- Dehydration
- Constipation
- Hearing/Visual impairment.

The attached table gives some possible causes for the above symptoms and suggested actions to take.

If you have any concerns, please contact your GP in the first instance and they will be able to help you rule out any of the above, prior to contacting us for an assessment.