

## What is dementia?

Dementia is an umbrella term for a set of symptoms caused by disorders affecting the brain, such as memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language. Many diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia and Lewy Body disease, cause dementia. Most dementias are progressive and degenerative. Currently, there is no cure and no treatment to stop or slow the progression, other than medication that may temporarily improve symptoms.

## Dementia in British Columbia

We estimate there are 70,000 British Columbians living with dementia. However, this number captures only those who have interacted with the health-care system, and we know that due to the stigma of dementia and difficulties in obtaining a diagnosis, there are likely more people living with the disease.

- People living with dementia are supported by family and friends, who dedicate countless hours in providing care throughout the dementia journey. One in five Canadians have experience caring for someone living with dementia.
- Approximately 60 per cent of people living with dementia live in our communities with a caregiver or independently.
- The majority of residents in B.C.'s care homes are living with dementia.
- Dementia prevalence will only increase as our population ages, emphasizing the importance of a proactive government approach.

## Essential support for dementia

- [First Link® dementia support](#) is the Society's suite of province-wide programs and services designed to support families affected by dementia, throughout the entire dementia journey. Support and services include education, information, support groups, a fitness and social program Minds in Motion®, in addition to the First Link® Dementia Helpline. In 2019-20, we connected with 13,586 First Link® clients in 200 communities across B.C.
- Support in the community is crucial. We need additional services for people living with dementia so they can live at home and independently for as long as possible. Necessary resources include adult day programs, home support and supports for caregivers.
- The Society works with local governments, the professional sector, community groups and the general public to create [dementia-friendly communities](#).
- Long-term care and hospital settings must strive to incorporate the principles of person-centred care and reforms outlined in the [Dementia-Friendly Care Homes Report \(2020\)](#) which include: higher staff-to-resident ratios, ongoing dementia education for staff, meaningful inclusion of families and dementia-friendly built design.

## Dementia and COVID-19

People living with dementia have faced significant challenges throughout the pandemic due to suspended community programs, decreased social interaction and for many, limited access or comfort using technology. Concerned caregivers report their loved ones in long-term care are experiencing feelings of isolation, and in some cases, cognitive decline at faster rates than before as they are unable to spend precious time with their friends and family members.

## What will you do to support people living with dementia and their families if elected into office?

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