



# Geriatric Fast Facts

## Topic: Dementia - the Basics

**Dementia** is a syndrome characterized by cognitive decline that occurs with a normal state of consciousness and in the **absence** of acute or sub acute disorders that may cause reversible cognitive impairment (eg, delirium, depression).

The prevalence of **Dementia**\* increases rapidly with age. It **doubles** every 5 years after the age of 60. It affects only 1% of those between the ages of 60 to 64, but **30 to 50%** of those older than 85 years of age.

| <u>Age</u> | <u>Relative risk</u> |
|------------|----------------------|
| 60         | 1%                   |
| 65         | 2%                   |
| 70         | 4%                   |
| 75         | 8%                   |
| 80         | 16%                  |
| 85+        | 32%                  |

**Dementia** is defined as *...a deterioration of intellectual function and other cognitive skills, leading to a decline in the ability to perform activities of daily living.*

\*It's important to distinguish between **Dementia** and **benign senescent forgetfulness** (eg, age-related memory loss) caused by the natural slowing of neural processes as we get older. Individuals with this condition can learn new information, recall information (maybe a little slower) but, when given time, their intellectual performance is essentially unchanged. Unlike those with dementia, their daily functioning remains unaffected.

**Dementia** is **not reversible** and not surprisingly, is the *leading cause of institutionalization* among the elderly.

....Next Fast Facts on the Signs of Dementia.....