

Contact us

For more information or advice, talk to a member of staff or the:

Alzheimer's Society

South West Area Office International House
Bank Road
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0117 967 2975

alzheimers.org.uk/factsheets

For information on Trust Services, visit

www.awp.nhs.uk

PALS

To make a comment, raise a concern or make a complaint, please contact the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

Tel: 01225 362900
Free phone: 0800 073 1778
Email: awp.pals@nhs.net

Other formats and languages

If you need this information in other formats such as large print, Braille) or another language, please call the PALS number.

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**Avon and Wiltshire Mental
Health Partnership**
NHS Trust

Vascular dementia

**Some information about dementia
resulting from poor blood flow to the
brain**

Vascular dementia is the second most common form of dementia after Alzheimer's disease.

How does it develop?

To be healthy and function properly, the brain cells need a good supply of blood. The blood is delivered through a network of arteries and veins.

If this vascular system within the brain becomes damaged and blood cannot reach the brain, the cells will eventually die. This can lead to the onset of vascular dementia.

What causes damage to the vascular system in the brain?

There are a number of conditions that can cause or increase damage to the vascular system. These include high blood pressure, heart problems, high cholesterol and diabetes.

This means it is important that these conditions are identified and treated at the earliest opportunity.

What are the symptoms?

Problems concentrating and communicating, depression accompanying the dementia, symptoms of 'stroke' such as physical weakness or paralysis, memory problems (although this may not be the first symptom), a 'stepped' progression with symptoms remaining at a constant level and then suddenly deteriorating, periods of acute confusion.

Other symptoms may include:

Hallucinations (seeing things that do not exist), delusions (believing things that are not true), changes in mood for example getting angry or feeling very sad, periods of restlessness.

What is the difference between vascular dementia and a stroke?

'Stroke' is the term used to describe permanent brain damage caused by an interruption in the supply of blood to specific parts of the brain.

The symptoms that a person experiences as a result of a stroke depend on which area of the brain has been damaged. Damage to the motor area can cause paralysis and damage to parts of the cortex can cause memory loss.

A transient ischemic attack (TIA) is a 'short-lived stroke' that lasts only a few minutes. It occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is briefly interrupted. TIA symptoms, which usually occur suddenly, are similar to those of stroke but most symptoms of a TIA disappear within an hour, although they may persist for up to 24 hours.

How is vascular dementia treated?

Although the brain damage that causes vascular dementia cannot be reversed, it may be possible to slow the progression of the disease in a number of ways. These include:

- Taking medication to treat any underlying conditions, such as stroke, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes or heart problems
- Adopting a healthier lifestyle by stopping smoking, taking regular exercise, eating healthily, and drinking alcohol only in moderation
- Receiving rehabilitative support, such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy, to help the person maximise their abilities.