

VASCULAR DEMENTIA

FACTS

- Second most common type of dementia after Alzheimer's
- Caused by damage to blood vessels that feed the brain
- Gradual decline in memory and functioning, characterized by alternating periods of stable symptoms followed by dramatic decline
- Worsening of symptoms are often due to small strokes
- Large strokes can cause vision changes or numbness and weakness in one part of the body
- May be diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or Lewy body dementia, in which case the dementia is called "mixed"

SYMPTOMS

- Symptoms can vary widely depending on where the damaged blood vessels are and how much brain tissue is supplied by them
- Memory loss may or may not be significant
- Impaired judgement and planning
- Declining ability to focus attention
- Difficulty finding words
- Delusions
- Uncontrolled laughing or crying

RISK FACTORS

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Heart disease
- History of stroke or mini-stroke (TIA)

DIAGNOSIS

- Assessment through review of medical history and medications, observations during the appointment, and interviews with family or close friends
- Physical and neurological exam, including memory test and depression screen
- Lab studies, including blood count and glucose, thyroid, Vitamin B12, and Vitamin D levels
- Possible CT scan of the head, MRI of the brain, and carotid ultrasound

TREATMENT

- Currently there is no cure; research is ongoing
- Memory medications can lessen the symptoms and improve quality of life
- Strict adherence to medications for cardiovascular health, including blood pressure medications and statins
- Engaging in healthy lifestyle activities such as exercise, a Mediterranean diet, new socializations, limiting alcohol, and stopping smoking