

# Frontotemporal (Lobar) Dementia



UHN

## What is it?

Frontotemporal dementia (FTD) or frontotemporal lobar dementia (FTLD) is a condition affecting the nervous system. It is part of a group of disorders that share many of the same features.

The frontal lobe of the brain controls a person's:

- motivation
- planning
- ability to do more than one thing at the same time
- language
- memory

The frontal lobe also keeps track of behaviour and personality.

In this type of dementia, the **frontal** and **temporal** lobes of the brain are affected the most.

## What are the symptoms?

People whose frontal lobe is mostly involved develop symptoms of:

- **apathy** (where they enjoy doing nothing and do not feel like taking part in any activity.) People with apathy may look and act depressed but they do not have depression.

Some people may develop:

- **disinhibition** (where their “social brake” does not work and they may do or say embarrassing things in public, not recognize another person's feelings, or do something impulsive.)

This type of FTLD is called Pick's disease.

People whose temporal lobe is mostly involved mainly develop:

- **language problems.** People will complain of having trouble finding the right words, talking to other people, understanding what others say, reading and writing. In this case they can either have (1) semantic dementia or (2) primary progressive aphasia.

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Over time, both the frontal and temporal lobes become involved. So if one person started with a language problem, over time their frontal lobe will be involved and they will develop a change in their behavior. A small number of people will develop muscle weakness and will have difficulties swallowing. If this happens, see your doctor.

### **How is FTLD different from typical Alzheimer's disease?**

Although the symptoms of FTLD are seen in Alzheimer's disease (AD), the behaviour and language problems happen much earlier in FTLD than in AD and tend to be more serious. Also, people with FTLD are younger than people with AD.

### **What causes FTLD?**

We do not know what causes FTLD. Unlike AD where we can learn much from autopsies, in FTLD there can be different findings and causes.

### **Are there treatments?**

Unfortunately, there is no cure for FTD or FTLD. Treatment usually involves keeping function for as long as possible.

### **Are there any safety concerns?**

Yes. Because language is affected and people can make judgments without reasoning (impulsive), there are several safety concerns including: a person's ability to read (such as medication instructions, bills, legal documents), write (such as cheques), cook and drive.