

Layton Aging & Alzheimer's Disease Center

Frontal Temporal Dementia (FTD)

Oregon Health & Science University
3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Road, CR-131
Portland, OR 97239-3098
503.494.6976

What is Frontal Temporal Dementia (FTD)? FTD refers to a group of rare neurological disorders mostly affecting the frontal and anterior temporal lobes of the brain. These areas control “executive functions” such as reasoning, personality, social behavior, movement, speech, language, and certain aspects of memory.

FTD usually develops between the ages of 35 and 75 affecting men and women about equally. FTD is believed to make-up only 3% of all dementia cases. Diseases classified as FTD include: Pick’s Disease, FEDP-17, Supranuclear Palsy and Corticobasal Degeneration.

What are the symptoms of FTD? FTD is usually characterized by a gradual onset of changes in personality, social behavior, and language ability. Particular changes depend on whether the damage has occurred primarily in the right or left side of the front of the brain. Language deficits are a major feature when the left side is primarily affected. Behavioral problems develop with right-sided disease. Symptoms include one or more of the following:

- uninhibited and socially inappropriate behaviors
- loss of awareness or concern about behavioral changes, personal appearance & hygiene
- major increase in appetite leading to constant eating and weight gain
- apathy, loss of drive, social withdrawal, lack of concern and empathy for others
- loss of speech and language (may become mute by middle to late stages)
- compulsive or repetitive behaviors (such as pacing, collecting things, or hand washing)
- oral fixation (wanting to put things besides food into their mouths, seen in late stages)
- some memory loss (seen in later stages)

How is FTD diagnosed? Diagnosis generally involves (1) a careful medical history and examination of behavioral changes (2) neuropsychological examination to assess language, memory, other cognitive skills and (3) brain imaging (CT or MRI scan) to determine brain areas affected and rule out other causes of symptoms.

What Treatment is available? While there is no treatment currently available to stop or slow FTD, a combination of medications and practical strategies can help with behavioral problems.

What Resources are available for caregivers? Educational materials and sources of support can be found at the Alzheimer's Association local chapter 1-800-733-0402 and national office www.alz.org and the Alzheimer's Disease Education & Referral Center www.alzheimers.org

Adapted from Frontotemporal Dementia: Growing Interest in Rare Dementia, CONNECTIONS, 9 (4) Alzheimer's Disease Education & Referral (ADEAR) Center.