

# Lewy body dementia

INFORMATION SHEET FROM THE SWEDISH DEMENTIA CENTRE

Lewykroppsdemens • faktablad på engelska

## A relatively new diagnosis

Dementia is the generic name for a number of symptoms that make it difficult to think, plan and communicate. The symptoms are caused by different illnesses and injuries to the brain. One of the most common dementia illnesses is Lewy body dementia.

Lewy body dementia is a relatively new diagnosis that usually afflicts persons older than 65. Its name comes from the small accumulations of proteins in the brain, "Lewy bodies," which are characteristic for the illness.

## Some typical symptoms

Lewy body dementia causes visual hallucinations – a person can sometimes see an object or other people who aren't there. Other signs of the illness are increasing difficulty in judging distances and seeing things in three dimensions, things which make it difficult to orientate and carry out tasks of a practical nature.

Everyday living is made even more difficult by slow movements and stiff muscles, physical symptoms that come early in the illness and which are more often associated with Parkinson's disease.

## Disturbed night sleep is usual at the onset of the illness

Lewy body dementia comes subversively. One of the first signs of the illness can be disturbed night sleep – a person can call out and gesticulate while asleep. They can feel confused, for what may seem no apparent reason. Forgetfulness and trouble finding words, usual at the beginning of a dementia illness, is a less obvious sign in Lewy body dementia.

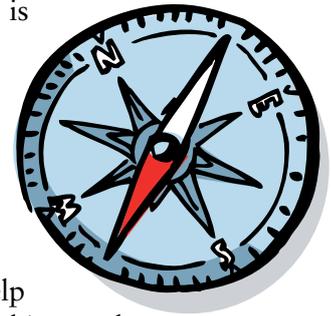
## Conditions can vary considerably

Gradually the symptoms become more obvious and both mental and physical functions are affected. The patient often feels tired and sleeps longer, sometimes even during the day. The illness makes it more difficult to remain concentrated. Another

typical feature of Lewy body dementia is that a person's condition varies strongly from day to day. Even blood pressure, which is often low, can for no apparent reason fluctuate up and down.

## Important with an early diagnosis

Lewy body dementia cannot be diagnosed with a simple test. The diagnosis is built on a number of tests, examinations and talks with the patient and relatives. Dementia analysis usually takes four to six weeks. It is important that tests are started as soon as possible so that the right help and treatment can be started in good time. Today there is no cure for the illness but there are different ways of alleviating the symptoms.



## Different ways of alleviating the symptoms

Characteristic for Lewy body dementia is that neuroleptics, which are normally prescribed with visual hallucinations, can give serious side effects. These medicines should therefore be avoided.

However, numerous medicines that have been developed for the treatment of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's have a good affect, mainly at the beginning of the illness.

Persons with Lewy body dementia require a lot of help. Auxiliary resources and other contributions can make everyday living easier. It is also important to be given an explanation of the symptoms and in the best way possible be able to plan for a so good and meaningful life as possible.

As time goes by more help and support from the community in care and welfare will be needed.

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Additional information sheets in different languages are available on the Swedish Dementia Centre's website:  
[www.demenscentrum.se/Faktablad](http://www.demenscentrum.se/Faktablad)

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Svenskt Demenscentrum

Svenskt Demenscentrum, Gävlegatan 16, 113 30 Stockholm, 08 - 690 58 00, [info@demenscentrum.se](mailto:info@demenscentrum.se)

[www.demenscentrum.se](http://www.demenscentrum.se)