

# Frontotemporal Dementia

## What is frontotemporal dementia?

Frontotemporal dementia, or FTD, is a disease in which people lose tissue at the front (frontal lobes) and sides (temporal lobes) of their brain. This gradually causes problems with behavior and language. Doctors do not know what causes it.

## Who gets it?

Anyone can get FTD, but it usually happens in people 45 to 65 years of age. It also happens more often in people with family members who have had dementia.

## How do I know if a friend or family member has it?

People with FTD typically don't have the severe memory problems that people with Alzheimer disease do. There are different types of FTD that can affect different functions. People with FTD may have changes in behavior, such as losing interest in doing things. Sometimes these symptoms can seem like depression. Some people with FTD may say or do inappropriate things. They don't usually see a problem with the behaviors or admit there is anything to be worried about. Sometimes a person's language

is affected. For example, the person may say things that have no meaning or that are hard to understand.

There are no routine blood or imaging tests to diagnose FTD. However, magnetic resonance imaging may be able to help with diagnosis and ruling out other causes. Doctors can also ask questions that may help to diagnose FTD.

## Can it be treated?

There is no cure for FTD. Most medicines treat symptoms, such as depression. Counseling and support groups may help people with FTD and their families.

## Where can I get more information?

AAFP's Patient Education Resource  
Web site: <http://familydoctor.org>

Association for Frontotemporal Dementias  
Web site: <http://www.ftd-picks.org>

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**This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.**

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