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## Could the problems of aging ever be counteracted?

Humans can only expect to live longer than ever before but with the great benefit comes the struggle of having to endure years of pain and discomfort. Grey hairs, wrinkles and weak bones can be daunting but all jokes aside aging has dramatic and detrimental effects on the mental and physical health. There are many factors that can affect our aging process including:

- Genetics
- Environment
- Lifestyle

The most common widespread health conditions amongst the elderly include:

- Cardiovascular conditions
- Dementia
- Arthritis
- Cancer
- Osteoporosis
- Diabetes
- Pneumonia
- Obesity
- Depression Dementia

All these issues have their own severities but the one hardest to comprehend with is dementia – this simple word describes the mass of distressing symptoms that 7% of over 65s have to endure daily. These may include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language. These changes may seem often small to start with but over time it can even lead to severe changes in mood and/or behaviour. Dementia is simply an ‘umbrella’ term for a collection of neurological disorders, of which Alzheimer’s disease is the most common. Some forms of dementia you may have not heard include Vascular dementia and Frontotemporal dementia. Vascular dementia is the 2nd most common form of dementia in over 65s and it relates to the forms of dementia which are caused by problems to the blood supply to the brain. Even though dementia is commonly associated with the elderly, it is NOT a natural part of aging, but it is linked with an ongoing deterioration of brain functioning. There are a lot of symptoms other than memory loss associated with dementia including decline of thinking speed, control of emotions, movement and even difficulty in carrying out simple daily activities such as cooking meals. This once-straightforward sequence of events becomes almost impossible for a person with dementia to handle.

Causes of dementia:

- Alzheimer’s disease – Damage is caused to brain cells due to an abnormal protein build-up around the cells and to their internal structure, which causes chemical connections between cells to decline. And thus, affecting memory and the ability to process and store information correctly.
- Vascular dementia – the main cause of this type of dementia is due to problems with the

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blood circulation to the brain because of narrowing or blockage of blood vessels. In vascular dementia symptoms may occur suddenly, if the patient has suffered from a large stroke.

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