

GLOBAL DETERIORATION SCALE (GDS)

Stage	Deficits in cognition and function	Usual care setting
1	Subjectively and objectively normal	Independent
2	Subjective complaints of mild memory loss. Objectively normal on testing. No functional deficit	Independent
3	Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) Earliest clear-cut deficits. Functionally normal but co-workers may be aware of declining work performance. Objective deficits on testing. Denial may appear.	Independent
4	Early dementia Clear-cut deficits on careful clinical interview. Difficulty performing complex tasks, e.g. handling finances, travelling. Denial is common. Withdrawal from challenging situations.	Might live independently – perhaps with assistance from family or caregivers.
5	Moderate dementia Can no longer survive without some assistance. Unable to recall major relevant aspects of their current lives, e.g. an address or telephone number of many years, names of grandchildren, etc. Some disorientation to date, day of week, season, or to place. They require no assistance with toileting, eating, or dressing but may need help choosing appropriate clothing.	At home with live-in family member. In seniors' residence with home support. Possibly in facility care, especially if behavioural problems or comorbid physical disabilities.
6	Moderately severe dementia May occasionally forget name of spouse. Largely unaware of recent experiences and events in their lives. Will require assistance with basic ADLs. May be incontinent of urine. Behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) are common, e.g. delusions, repetitive behaviours, agitation.	Most often in Complex Care facility.
7	Severe dementia Verbal abilities will be lost over the course of this stage. Incontinent. Needs assistance with feeding. Lose ability to walk.	Complex Care

Adapted by Dr. Doug Drummond from Reisberg B, Ferris SH, Leon MJ, et al. The global deterioration scale for assessment of primary degenerative dementia. American Journal of Psychiatry 1982;139:1136-1139.