

## LEWY BODY DEMENTIA IS...

A progressive brain disease and the second most common cause of neurodegenerative dementia after Alzheimer's disease. Lewy body dementia is a 'spectrum disorder,' meaning it can occur alone or in combination with Parkinson's disease, or co-exist with Alzheimer's disease.

## LEWY BODY DEMENTIA IS NOT A RARE DISEASE...

It accounts for up to 20% of dementia cases in the US — that's up to 1.4 million cases in the US alone, with only 30-50% of LBD cases being accurately diagnosed, even in dementia centers.

## EARLY AND ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE...

Antipsychotic drugs may cause **extreme adverse** reactions in those with LBD. Cholinesterase inhibitors may **improve** alertness and cognition and potentially reduce hallucinations and behavioral symptoms.

### Lewy body dementias (LBD) include:

Parkinson's disease dementia (PDD)

dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB)

### Items in bold are included in DLB diagnostic criteria:

#### Dementia symptoms specific to Lewy body dementia:

- **Fluctuating cognition**
- **Neuroleptic sensitivity**

#### LBD Symptoms that resemble Alzheimer's:

- **Progressive memory loss**
- Changes in mood and behavior
- Decreased judgment and insight
- Loss of initiative
- Disorientation regarding time and place
- Difficulty with language and tasks

#### Dementia symptoms that resemble Parkinson's:

- **Extrapyramidal signs**
- Muscle stiffness and rigidity
- Very slow movements, frozen stance
- Balancing difficulties, shuffling gait
- Tremors
- Stooped posture
- Blank facial expression
- Difficulty swallowing, weak voice
- Restless leg syndrome
- Repeated falls, fainting, myoclonus

#### Additional symptoms typical of Lewy body dementia:

- **Visual hallucinations** (also smell, sound, taste, touch)
- Transient/unexplained unresponsiveness
- Delusions, mood disorders
- Illusions
- Visuospatial impairment (depth perception, object orientation)
- **Sleep disturbances, such as acting out vivid nightmares and dreams**
- Autonomic dysfunction (blood pressure fluctuations, constipation, incontinence, sexual dysfunction)

### Clinical management is challenging because...

Antipsychotic drugs may cause worsening of confusion, Parkinsonism, heavy sedation, neuroleptic malignant syndrome.

Benzodiazepines, anticholinergics, and some surgical anesthetics, antidepressants, and over-the-counter medications may cause sedation, motor impairment or confusion.

Some medications for parkinsonian symptoms may increase confusion, delusions, and hallucinations.



912 Killian Hill Rd. S.W.  
Lilburn, GA 30047  
Office: 404-935-6444  
Fax: 480-422-5434

Caregiver Helpline: 1-800-LEWY-SOS (800-539-9767)

[www.lbda.org](http://www.lbda.org)