



NEUROCOGNITIVE DISORDERS

MAJOR AND MILD NEUROCOGNITIVE DISORDER DUE TO HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE (DEMENTIA DUE TO HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE)

What it is:

Huntington's disease is a neurodegenerative genetic disorder that affects muscle coordination as well as cognitive and behavioural changes. The earliest symptoms are often subtle psychiatric and cognitive changes rather than physical motor symptoms. Motor symptoms can include lack of coordination and an unsteady way of walking, as well as uncoordinated, jerky body movements. Physical abilities gradually worsen until coordinated movement becomes difficult. Generally cognitive impairments tend to increase in severity as Huntington's disease progresses, and many individuals develop major or mild neurocognitive disorder, or dementia, due to Huntington's disease.

For a diagnosis of major or mild neurocognitive disorder due to Huntington's disease to be made, the following criteria should be met:

1. The criteria for major or mild neurocognitive disorder should be met
2. The cognitive and behavioural impairment slowly but gradually worsens
3. Huntington's disease has been clinically established, or a risk for Huntington's disease has been identified based on genetic testing
4. The neurocognitive disorder is not attributed to another medical condition or mental disorder

Common symptoms:

1. Slower processing speed, for example slower thinking or taking longer to solve a problem
2. Difficulty with organisation of tasks and responsibilities
3. Difficulty planning tasks or activities
4. Depression
5. Irritability
6. Obsessive-compulsive symptoms

7. Apathy
8. Psychosis (rarely)
9. Impulsivity
10. Personality changes



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Causes:

Major and mild neurocognitive disorder due to Huntington's disease occurs as part of the progression of the disease. Huntington's disease is hereditary, and so genetics are a strong risk factor for the development of the disease. However not everyone with a family history of the disease will develop it, and some individuals with no family history of Huntington's disease may still develop the disease.

Remember to always consult a mental health or medical practitioner regarding any questions you may have about a mental health diagnosis and treatment options.

This factsheet is based on information obtained from the DSM-5:
American Psychiatric Association, 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition.*