



Alzheimer's Disease

Disease Overview

Alzheimer's disease is an irreversible, progressive brain disease that slowly destroys memory and thinking skills, and eventually even the ability to carry out the simplest tasks. In most people with Alzheimer's, symptoms first appear after age 60.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia among older people. Dementia is the loss of cognitive functioning—thinking, remembering, and reasoning—to such an extent that it interferes with a person's daily life and activities. Estimates vary, but experts suggest that as many as 5.1 million Americans may have Alzheimer's.

CARE IMPLICATIONS

- Behavior in individuals with Alzheimer's is unpredictable, and a caregiver needs to be highly trained to understand the cause of behaviors and to help reduce environmental impacts that might contribute to them.
- Individuals with early to mid-stage Alzheimer's can do activities that will help stimulate the brain and hold onto the memory they have remaining.
- This type of cognitive intervention can be done in the home, in regular structured intervals.
- As the disease progresses, individuals lose the ability to keep themselves occupied throughout the day; a caregiver in the home can keep them engaged which helps prevent withdrawal.
- People with Alzheimer's shouldn't be corrected when they forget something or make mistakes; it only aggravates them. They thrive with a caregiver that knows how to build their self-esteem and keep them calm and content.

To Learn More

Alzheimer's Association: www.alz.org
National Institute on Aging:
<http://www.nia.nih.gov/Alzheimers>

Alzheimer's is caused by plaques and tangles in the brain:

- Plaques build up between nerve cells. They contain deposits of a protein fragment called beta-amyloid (BAY-tuh AM-uh-loyd).
- Tangles are twisted fibers of another protein called tau (rhymes with "wow"). Tangles form inside dying cells. Though most people develop some plaques and tangles as they age, those with Alzheimer's tend to develop far more.

The plaques and tangles tend to form in a predictable pattern, beginning in areas important in learning and memory and then spreading to other regions.

Typical Age-related Changes	Signs of Alzheimer's
Making a bad decision once in a while	Poor judgment and decision making
Missing a monthly payment	Inability to manage a budget
Forgetting which day it is and remembering later	Losing track of the date or the season
Sometimes forgetting which word to use	Difficulty having a conversation
Losing things from time to time	Misplacing things and being unable to retrace steps to find them

Call our care team today!

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