

Alzheimer's Disease

Facts about a major cause of dementia



*Don't Feel Guilty ∞
You Can't Do It All!*

What is Alzheimer's Disease?

Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia — the loss of intellectual and social abilities severe enough to interfere with daily functioning. In Alzheimer's disease, healthy brain tissue degenerates, causing a steady decline in memory and mental abilities.

Alzheimer's was one of the first degenerative brain diseases to be recognized and described by science, and is not a part of normal aging. The risk of the disorder increases with age. About 5 percent of people between the ages of 65 and 74 have Alzheimer's disease, and nearly half the people over the age of 85 have Alzheimer's.



President Ronald Reagan and actor Charlton Heston at a 1981 meeting of the President's Arts and Humanities Task Force. In later years, both would develop Alzheimer's Disease.

Caring For Alzheimer's Patients

There are profound physical and psychological disabilities associated with Alzheimer's Disease, and patients require careful monitoring and attention.

Although there's no cure, treatments may improve the quality of life for people with Alzheimer's disease. Those with Alzheimer's — as well as those who care for them — need support and affection from friends and family to cope.

See reverse side for information on Alzheimer's symptoms

Need more information?

Alzheimer's Association
1-800-272-3900
www.alz.org

Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral Center (ADEAR)
1-800-438-4380
www.alzheimers.org

Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA)
1-866-232-8484
www.alzfdn.org
www.alzquilt.org

Doctor's Guide.com — Alzheimer's
This section of the website provides news and information for people with Alzheimer's disease and caregivers.
www.pslgroup.com/alzheimer.htm

Family Caregiver Alliance
www.caregiver.org

MayoClinic.com — Alzheimer's Center
www.mayoclinic.com/health/alzheimers/AZ99999

Alzheimer's Research Forum
www.alzforum.org

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Symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease

How do you know if it is mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease? As people get older it's common for them to forget things. But at what point is misplacing your car keys considered old age or something worse? Alzheimer's disease can cause loss of **cognition**, which includes things like memory, understanding, communication, and reasoning.

Here is a checklist of common symptoms, and hints about differentiating Alzheimer's from common aging:

Forgetting Recently Learned Information

This is one of the most common early signs of Alzheimer's disease. A person begins to forget more often and is unable to recall the information later.

What's Normal Aging? Forgetting names or appointments occasionally.

Difficulty Performing Familiar Tasks

People with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease often find it hard to plan or complete everyday tasks. Individuals may lose track of the steps needed to prepare a meal, place a telephone call, or play a game.

What's Normal Aging? Occasionally forgetting why you came into a room or what you planned to say.

Problems with Language

People with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease often forget simple words or substitute unusual words, making their speech or writing hard to understand. They may not be able to find the toothbrush, for example, and instead ask for "that thing for my mouth."

What's Normal Aging? Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.

Disorientation to Time and Place

People with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease can become lost in their own neighborhoods, forget where they are and how they got there, and not know how to get back home.

What's Normal Aging? Forgetting the day of the week or where you were going.

Poor or Decreased Judgment

Those with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease may dress inappropriately, wearing several layers on a warm day, or little clothing in the cold. They may show poor judgment about money, like giving away large sums to telemarketers.

What's Normal Aging? Making a questionable or debatable decision from time to time.

Problems with Abstract Thinking

Someone with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease may have unusual difficulty performing complex mental tasks, like forgetting what numbers are and how they should be used.

What's Normal Aging? Finding it hard to balance a checkbook.

Misplacing Things

A person with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease may put things in unusual places: an iron might go in the freezer or a wristwatch in the sugar bowl.

What's Normal Aging? Temporarily misplacing keys or a wallet.

Changes in Mood or Behavior

Someone with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease may show rapid mood swings - from calm to tears to anger - for no apparent reason.

What's Normal Aging? Occasionally feeling sad or moody.

Changes in Personality

The personalities of people with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease can change dramatically. They may become extremely confused, suspicious, fearful, or dependent on a family member.

What's Normal Aging? People's personalities do change somewhat with age.

Loss of Initiative

A person with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease may become very passive, sitting in front of the TV for hours, sleeping more than usual, or not wanting to do usual activities.

What's Normal Aging? Sometimes feeling weary of work or social obligations.