

10 warning signs of Alzheimer's disease®

Memory loss that disrupts everyday life is not a normal part of aging. It is a symptom of dementia, a gradual and progressive decline in memory, thinking and reasoning skills. The most common form of dementia is Alzheimer's disease, a disorder that results in the loss of brain cells.

The Alzheimer's Association, the world leader in Alzheimer research and support, had developed a checklist of common symptoms to help recognize the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease.

1. Memory loss. Forgetting recently learned information is one of the most common early signs of dementia. A person begins to forget more often and is unable to recall the information later.

2. Difficulty performing familiar tasks. People with dementia often find it hard to complete everyday tasks that were once so familiar, they were nearly automatic. Individuals may forget the steps to prepare a meal, use a household appliance or participate in a lifelong hobby.

3. Problems with language. People with Alzheimer's disease often forget simple words or substitute unusual words, making their speech or writing hard to understand. They may be unable to find the toothbrush, for example, and instead ask for "that thing for my mouth."

4. Disorientation to time and place. People with 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.

5. Poor or decreased judgment. Those with Alzheimer's 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.

6. Problems with abstract thinking. Balancing a checkbook is a task that can be challenging for some. But a person with Alzheimer's may forget what numbers are and how they should be used.

7. Misplacing things. Anyone can temporarily misplace a wallet or key. A person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in unusual places: an iron in the freezer or a wristwatch in the sugar bowl.

8. Changes in mood or behavior. Someone with Alzheimer's disease can show rapid mood swings — from calm to tears to anger — for no apparent reason.

9. Changes in personality. The personalities of people with dementia can change dramatically. They may become extremely confused, suspicious, fearful or dependent on a family member.

10. Loss of initiative. A person with 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.

If you or someone you know is experiencing these symptoms, consult a physician today. Early and accurate diagnosis of Alzheimer's or other dementias is an important step to getting the right treatment, care and support.

The Alzheimer's Association, the world leader in Alzheimer research, care and support, is dedicated to finding prevention methods, treatments and an eventual cure for Alzheimer's.

24/7 Helpline **1.800.272.3900**

TDD Access **1.312.335.8882**

Web site **www.alz.org**

e-mail **info@alz.org**

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