

Alzheimer's Disease

Signs and symptoms of Alzheimer's disease

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive condition, which means the symptoms develop gradually over many years and eventually become more severe. It affects multiple brain functions.

The first sign of Alzheimer's disease is usually minor memory problems.

For example, this could be forgetting about recent conversations or events, and forgetting the names of places and objects.

As the condition develops, memory problems become more severe and further symptoms can develop, such as:

- confusion, disorientation and getting lost in familiar places
- difficulty planning or making decisions
- problems with speech and language
- problems moving around without assistance or performing self-care tasks
- personality changes, such as becoming aggressive, demanding and suspicious of others
- hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there) and delusions (believing things that are untrue)
- low mood or anxiety

Who is affected?

Alzheimer's disease is most common in people over the age of 65. The risk of Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia increases with age, affecting an estimated 1 in 14 people over the age of 65 and 1 in every 6 people over the age of 80, but around 1 in every 20 cases of Alzheimer's disease affects people aged 40 to 65. This is called early- or young-onset Alzheimer's disease.

Getting a diagnosis

As the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease progress slowly, it can be difficult to recognise that there's a problem. Many people feel that memory problems are simply a part of getting older.

Also, the disease process itself may (but not always) prevent people recognising changes in their memory. But Alzheimer's disease is not a "normal" part of the ageing process. An accurate and timely diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease can give you the best chance to prepare and plan for the future, as well as receive any treatment or support that may help.

If you're worried about your memory or think you may have dementia, it's a good idea to see your GP. If possible, someone who knows you well should be with you as they can help describe any changes or problems they have noticed. If you're worried about someone else, encourage them to make an appointment and perhaps suggest that you go along with them. There's no single test that can be used to diagnose Alzheimer's disease. And it's important to remember that memory problems do not necessarily mean you have Alzheimer's disease. Your GP will ask questions about any problems you're experiencing and may do some tests to rule out other conditions.

If Alzheimer's disease is suspected, you may be referred to a specialist service to:

- assess your symptoms in more detail
- organise further testing, such as brain scans if necessary
- create a treatment and care plan

How Alzheimer's disease is treated

There's currently no cure for Alzheimer's disease, but medicines are available that can help relieve some of the symptoms. Various other types of support are also available to help people with Alzheimer's live as independently as possible, such as making changes to your home environment so it's easier to move around and remember daily tasks.

Psychological treatments such as cognitive stimulation therapy may also be offered to help support your memory, problem solving skills and language ability.

Can Alzheimer's disease be prevented?

As the exact cause of Alzheimer's disease is not clear, there's no known way to prevent the condition, but there are things you can do that may reduce your risk or delay the onset of dementia, such as:

- stopping smoking and cutting down on alcohol, eating a healthy, balanced diet and maintaining a healthy weight, staying physically fit and mentally active

These measures have other health benefits, such as lowering your risk of cardiovascular disease and improving your overall mental health

www.tdls2016.org

email tdls2016@virginmedia.com

Phone 07722 958610