

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND DEMENTIA

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a progressive condition that causes memory loss and cognitive decline. A substance known as amyloid builds up in the brain, and these areas are called plaques. The amyloid plaques are thought to decrease the brain cells' ability to function normally and communicate with each other, thereby causing memory loss and decline in cognitive skills. This process is also known as dementia. There are many types, and Alzheimer's disease is the most common. So, the term "Alzheimer's" is often used as an umbrella in our society for any type of dementia.

Common Symptoms

Quite often, the symptoms of early stages of Alzheimer's disease are subtle, and family members or friends may notice them before the patient. Some of these can include:

- Repetition during daily conversation
- Loss of short-term memory
- Confusion
- Changes in behavior and personality
- Trouble concentrating
- Getting lost

As the disease progresses, patients may begin to have difficulty performing the simple tasks of daily living such as eating, bathing and dressing. They also often lose interest in their usual activities.



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Diagnosing Alzheimer's Disease

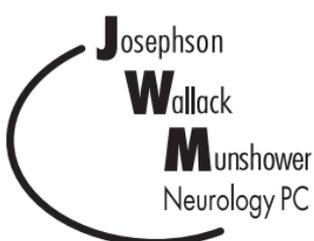
If Alzheimer's disease is suspected, a neurologist will perform a thorough medical and neurological evaluation, including a medical history of the patient and tests that evaluate thinking and memory. Blood tests and brain imaging scans may also be ordered. There is no "simple" test to detect Alzheimer's disease. A PET/CT scan, however, can now be used along with a substance injected into the bloodstream to determine the presence of amyloid plaque. A positive scan showing this plaque may mean a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease.

Treating and Controlling Alzheimer's Disease

While there is no cure for Alzheimer's disease, there are medications available that are effective in slowing its progress, such as Aricept, Exelon and Namenda. There are also promising medications on the horizon that are being tested and evaluated through clinical trials.

10 Tips For a Healthy Brain

- 1) Keep your brain active and stimulated. Read books, do crosswords, puzzles and trivia.
- 2) Socialize and engage in stimulating conversation.
- 3) Organize yourself and your life.
- 4) Eat healthy foods. A Mediterranean diet is best. Lower your cholesterol, and normalize blood sugars.
- 5) Exercise and stay as active as possible, as your doctor permits.
- 6) Don't smoke, and visit your doctor for yearly check-ups.
- 7) Reduce the stress in your life, and treat depression.
- 8) Write things down. Don't worry about memorizing everything.
- 9) Get plenty of rest and sleep. Your brain works best when rested.
- 10) Take medications as directed by your physician; don't skip doses or take over-the-counter medicines or herbals without talking with your doctor.



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For more information about Alzheimer's disease visit www.alz.org (Alzheimer's Association).

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