

Alzheimer Disease

What you need to know:

What is Alzheimer disease? Alzheimer is a brain disorder that causes memory loss over time. Parts of the brain die and cannot make normal levels of brain chemicals. This causes problems with how you think, behave, and remember things. The disease usually starts at about age 65 to 70 years but can start earlier. The exact cause of Alzheimer is not known.

What increases my risk for Alzheimer? The risk for Alzheimer increases with age, but it is not a normal part of aging.

- A family history of Alzheimer
- A protein called ApoE, which normally carries cholesterol in the blood
- Diabetes or Down syndrome
- High cholesterol or carotid artery disease
- A heart attack, head injury, or depression
- Smoking cigarettes

What are the signs and symptoms of mild Alzheimer? Early Alzheimer symptoms may be minor and last from 1 to 3 years.

- Remembering what happened years ago but not what happened yesterday
- Forgetting the names of common things or people
- Confusion about what month or season it is
- Forgetting to brush teeth or comb hair
- Trouble taking care of home or finances or difficulty making decisions
- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Feeling depressed, angry, or confused about the changes

What are the signs and symptoms of moderate Alzheimer?

- Problems choosing clothes to wear, doing simple jobs, or caring for self
- Not recognizing familiar people
- Trouble finding words to say what you mean or talking in normal sentences, or speech that is hard to understand
- Feeling anxious, restless, and agitated at night and seeming depressed or worried
- Trouble controlling emotions and becoming loud, violent, and hard to control
- Becoming confused and wandering off or pacing
- Not being able to plan and follow through with activities
- Thinking something is true even though it is not, or seeing things that are not actually there
- Trouble controlling when you urinate or have a bowel movement



What are the signs and symptoms of severe Alzheimer?

- Complete loss of memory
- Complete loss of speech
- Loss of bladder and bowel control
- Trouble walking
- Becoming angry and out of control or aggressive and destroying things
- Not being able to care for self and needing someone to take care

How is Alzheimer diagnosed?

- **Mental function testing** checks how well patient think and solve problems. Patient may be asked to draw a face clock. The clock may need to show a certain time of day. May be asked what month it currently is, or the city. Other tests may be used to check patient attention, language skills, or ability to see how objects are spaced apart.
- **Memory testing** will be done regularly so healthcare providers can monitor memory changes over time. Doctor will test long-term memory by asking questions about how much patient remember from the past. They will also test patient short-term memory by asking patient to remember new facts.
- **Blood tests** may be used to rule out any other conditions that could be causing symptoms. Some temporary conditions may be similar to Alzheimer but can be treated.
- **MRI or CT** pictures of patient brain may be taken.
- A **pet scan** may be used to record the activity of chemicals in brain.

How is Alzheimer treated? Alzheimer cannot be cured, but it can be managed. Treatment includes keeping a good quality of life, for as long as possible

- **Medicines** may be given to help you think better or to slow the death of brain cells. Patient may also need medicines to help you feel less depressed, anxious, angry, or restless. These medicines can also help patient sleep better. Medicines can also help with bladder and bowel control or to control delusions (false beliefs) and hallucinations.
- **Counselling (talk therapy)** can help patient find ways to cope with Alzheimer. Patient may work only with a counsellor, or also with family members or others with Alzheimer. Counselling may help patient to talk about feelings.

What can we do to manage Alzheimer?

- **Place clocks and calendars where patient can see them.**
- **Keep activities the same from day to day.**
- **Keep mealtimes at the same time each day.**
- **Create a bathroom schedule.**
- **Limit the amount of liquid patient drink in the evening.**
- **Keep patient mind and body active.**

Reference: Micromedex's Care Notes System Online 2.0