

Alzheimer's Awareness

Everyone is forgetful now and again, and as we age the occurrences may become even more frequent. Yet most people who have mild forgetfulness do not have Alzheimer's disease. But when memory loss starts to interfere with daily activities, it may be time to consult with a physician.

Alzheimer's disease is not a product of the natural aging process. Scientists do not know what causes the disease; however, age is a factor. The disease usually begins after age 60 and the risk goes up with the increase in age. Approximately five million Americans currently suffer from Alzheimer's disease. According to the National Institute on Aging, there are ten early warning signs of Alzheimer's disease:

Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

According to the Alzheimer's Association (alz.org), there are ten warning signs of Alzheimer's disease:

- ① Memory loss that disrupts daily life: forgetting recently learned information or important dates
- ② Challenges in planning or solving problems: trouble following familiar recipe or with monthly bills
- ③ Difficulty completing familiar tasks: trouble driving to familiar location or managing a budget
- ④ Confusion with time or place: losing track of dates, seasons and the passage of time
- ⑤ Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships: difficulty judging distances and determining color or contrast
- ⑥ New problems with words or writing: repeating self, trouble following a conversation
- ⑦ Misplacing things and inability to retrace steps: placing things in unusual places and may accuse others of stealing
- ⑧ Decreased or poor judgment: problems with money, paying less attention to grooming
- ⑨ Withdrawal from work or social activities: trouble completing a favorite hobby and shying away from social engagement
- ⑩ Changes in mood and personality: can become confused, suspicious, fearful, anxious and easily upset

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The Stages of Alzheimer's

Stage 1: No impairment (normal function)

A person in the first stage of Alzheimer's exhibits no problems with memory, nor is dementia evident in an interview with a physician.

Stage 2: Very mild cognitive decline (may be normal age-related changes or earliest signs of Alzheimer's disease)

During this stage, there may be a few issues with memory, such as misplacing items or not being able to recall the correct words in conversation. However, there is still no evidence of dementia in a medical interview or to family and friends.

Stage 3: Mild cognitive decline (early-stage Alzheimer's can be diagnosed in some, but not all, individuals with these symptoms)

Symptoms such as memory lapses and problems with concentration begin to be noticeable to family and friends, as well as in an in-depth medical interview.

Stage 4: Moderate cognitive decline (mild or early-stage Alzheimer's disease)

In the fourth stage, symptoms such as problems with complex tasks, memory loss related to recent events as well as the person's own history, inability to perform difficult mental calculations, and moodiness are clearly detected during a medical interview.

Stage 5: Moderately severe cognitive decline (moderate or mid-stage Alzheimer's disease)

At this point, help is needed with daily activities. Memory loss and thinking issues are noticeable, and the person may become confused about what day it is and where he or she is. Significant details about the person and his or her family are still remembered, however, and the person is able to eat and use the toilet unassisted.

Stage 6: Severe cognitive decline (moderately severe or mid-stage Alzheimer's disease)

Memory issues become even more severe at this stage, and the person begins to need extensive help with day-to-day activities. Personality changes are evident, and the person may have periods of unawareness of location and recent experiences, as well as personal history and his or her own spouse or caregiver. The person may also be prone to wander and become lost.

Stage 7: Very severe cognitive decline (severe or late-stage Alzheimer's disease)

In this final stage, the person needs assistance to eat or use the toilet as well as with other aspects of personal care. Conversations can no longer be carried on, although the person may still be able to speak in words or phrases, and movements become uncontrollable. Eventually, the ability to smile and hold the head upright may also be lost. Muscle movements, reflexes and swallowing become impaired.

Hired Hands Homecare walks hand in hand with families through the progression of their loved one's disease, offering professional, compassionate in-home care. Contact **Hired Hands Homecare** to learn if your loved ones could be a good fit for our specialized in-home Alzheimer's and dementia care services.

Source: Alz.org