



## Dementia – Alzheimer

Alzheimer's is a brain disorder affecting as many as 5.3 million Americans.

Discovered in 1905 by German physician Alois Alzheimer is classified as a disease with no known cure and is fatal.

Alzheimer's causes problems with the memory by destroying brain cells. The loss of these brain cells affects one's ability to think and behave properly.

As the most common form of Dementia, Alzheimer's impacts an individual's family, work and social life as the ability to reason, communicate, learn and think begin to deteriorate.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, more than 60% of those with dementia will wander away at some point.

## Causes and Risk Factors

Family history plays a large part in who develops Alzheimer's and when.

A person with a parent or sibling who has Alzheimer's is two or three times as likely to develop the disease.

Age also plays a part in the development of this disease mostly affecting people 65 and older.

## Warning Signs

The Alzheimer's Association has provided a list of warning signs for the onset of this disease.

1. Memory Loss
2. Difficulty performing familiar tasks
3. Problems with language
4. Disorientation to time and place
5. Poor or decreased judgment
6. Problems with abstract thinking
7. Misplacing things
8. Changes in mood or behavior
9. Changes in personality
10. Loss of initiative

## Stages of Decline



The Alzheimer's Association states there are seven stages.

- Stage 1 No impairment
- Stage 2 Very mild decline
- Stage 3 Mild decline
- Stage 4 Moderate decline (mild or early stage)
- Stage 5 Moderately severe decline (moderate or mid-stage)
- Stage 6 Severe decline (moderately severe or mid-stage)
- Stage 7 Very severe decline (severe or late stage)

## Confirmation

If you suspect that you or a loved one may be developing or have Alzheimer's, you should contact your primary care doctor. He/she will begin the diagnostic process and may refer you to a specialist for further testing.

## Treatment

Even though currently there is no known cure, scientists have developed several drugs for the treatment of cognitive symptoms of Alzheimer's or regulate the activity of glutamate. Some doctors will recommend patients take vitamin E, (an antioxidant), which is believed to help the cognitive symptoms. Please consult your doctor before taking vitamin E.

In 1906 when this disease was first described, the average affected person lived about 50 years. With improvements in treatment and technology, life expectancy has increased to an average of 79.6 years.

## Prevention

A low-fat diet rich in fruits and vegetables, exercise regularly and staying mentally active all help protect the brain. Evidence suggests the brain and heart have a common health link. Weight, blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar should also be kept at a healthy level. Also, avoid head injury.

*Source:*

*The Alzheimer's Association*

[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org),

1-800-272-3900