
10 WARNING SIGNS OF ALZHEIMER'S HOW TO IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS CONCERNS

Currently, over 55 million people worldwide are living with dementia, including more than 6 million Americans. In collaboration with experts in the field, the Alzheimer's Association® created a list of warning signs to help people identify symptoms that may be related to Alzheimer's or another dementia.

UNDERSTANDING ALZHEIMER'S AND DEMENTIA

It's common to experience some issues with memory, thinking and behavior as we age. However, changes that interfere with daily life could be a sign of something more serious, such as dementia.

Dementia is the umbrella term for a person's decline in memory and other cognitive abilities that is severe enough to interfere with daily life. It is not a normal part of aging. The most common cause of dementia is Alzheimer's (AHLZ-high-merz), a progressive brain disease that results in the loss of brain cells and function.

10 WARNING SIGNS OF ALZHEIMER'S

NOTE: It's possible for individuals to experience one or more of these signs in varying degrees. It is not necessary to experience every sign in order to raise concern.

1. MEMORY LOSS THAT DISRUPTS DAILY LIFE

One of the most common signs of Alzheimer's disease, especially in the early stage, is forgetting recently learned information. Others include forgetting important dates or events, asking the same questions repeatedly, and increasingly needing to rely on memory aids (e.g., reminder notes or electronic devices) or family members for things the person used to handle on their own.

What's a typical age-related change?

Sometimes forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later.

2. CHALLENGES IN PLANNING OR SOLVING PROBLEMS

Some people living with dementia may experience changes in their ability to develop and follow a plan or work with numbers. They may have trouble following a familiar recipe or keeping track of monthly bills. They may have difficulty concentrating and take much longer to do things than they did before.

What's a typical age-related change?

Making occasional errors when managing finances or household bills.

3. DIFFICULTY COMPLETING FAMILIAR TASKS

People living with Alzheimer's disease often find it hard to complete routine tasks. Sometimes they may have trouble driving to a familiar location, organizing a grocery list or remembering the rules of a favorite game.

What's a typical age-related change?

Occasionally needing help to use microwave settings or to record a TV show.

4. CONFUSION WITH TIME OR PLACE

People living with Alzheimer's can lose track of dates, seasons and the passage of time. They may have trouble understanding something if it is not happening immediately. Sometimes they may forget where they are or how they got there.

What's a typical age-related change?

Getting confused about the day of the week, but figuring it out later.

5. TROUBLE UNDERSTANDING VISUAL IMAGES AND SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS

For some people, vision problems are a sign of Alzheimer's. This may lead to difficulty with balance or trouble reading. They may also have problems judging distance and determining color or contrast, causing issues with driving.

What's a typical age-related change?

Vision changes related to cataracts.

6. NEW PROBLEMS WITH WORDS IN SPEAKING OR WRITING

People living with Alzheimer's may have trouble following or joining a conversation. They may stop in the middle of a conversation and have no idea how to continue, or repeat themselves. They may struggle with vocabulary, have trouble naming a familiar object or use the wrong name.

What's a typical age-related change?

Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.

7. MISPLACING THINGS AND LOSING THE ABILITY TO RETRACE STEPS

A person living with Alzheimer's may put things in unusual places. They may

lose things and be unable to go back over their steps to find them again. He or she may accuse others of stealing, especially as the disease progresses.

What's a typical age-related change?

Misplacing things from time to time and retracing steps to find them.

8. DECREASED OR POOR JUDGMENT

Individuals may experience changes in judgment or decision-making. For example, they may use poor judgment when dealing with money or pay less attention to grooming or keeping themselves clean.

What's a typical age-related change?

Making a bad decision or mistake once in a while, like neglecting to change the oil in the car.

9. WITHDRAWAL FROM WORK OR SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

A person living with Alzheimer's disease may experience changes in the ability to hold or follow a conversation. As a result, he or she may withdraw from hobbies, social activities or other engagements. They may have trouble keeping up with a favorite team or activity.

What's a typical age-related change?

Sometimes feeling uninterested in family or social obligations.

10. CHANGES IN MOOD OR PERSONALITY

Individuals living with Alzheimer's may experience mood or personality changes. They can become confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful or anxious. They may be easily upset at home, with friends or when out of their comfort zone.

What's a typical age-related change?

Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU NOTICE A SIGN

If you notice one or more signs in yourself or another person, it can be difficult to know what to do. It's natural to feel uncertain or nervous about discussing these changes with others. Voicing worries about your own health might make them seem more "real." Or, you may fear upsetting someone by sharing observations about changes in his or her abilities or behavior.

However, these are significant health concerns that should be evaluated by a doctor, and it's important to take action to figure out what's going on.

Have a conversation

If you've noticed any of the signs in yourself, confide in someone you trust. Similarly, if you've noticed memory changes in someone else, think about who would be best to approach the person, whether it's you or another trusted family member or friend. Have the conversation as soon as possible in a location that will be comfortable for everyone involved.

Visit alz.org/memoryconcerns for tips on approaching memory concerns.

See a doctor

Multiple conditions can cause cognitive changes, so it's essential to obtain a full medical evaluation to determine whether symptoms are related to Alzheimer's or something else. If the cause is not Alzheimer's or another dementia, it could be a treatable condition. If it is dementia, there are many benefits to receiving an early and accurate diagnosis, including an opportunity to plan for the future, access support services and explore treatment options.

To learn more about the diagnostic process, visit alz.org/evaluatememory.

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