

Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's Disease is the most common type of dementia. Dementia occurs as a result of changes in the brain that affect a person's ability to think and remember. It can become severe enough to affect daily activities.

Alzheimer's Disease causes brain changes over years and is not a normal part of aging. No one knows what causes Alzheimer's Disease, but much research is being done. You may be more at risk if you had a family member with the disease.

Signs

The signs start slowly and can vary or worsen over time. A person cannot control the signs. Treatment can help, but it does not cure the disease.

Signs may include:

- Memory loss, especially about recent events
- Confusion about time and place
- Poor judgment
- Trouble learning new information
- Changes in being able to do such things as drive, handle money, take medicine, cook, dress and bathe
- Loss of sense of smell
- Wandering or getting lost

Your Care

Your doctor may order tests to check your brain such as a CT scan, a MRI or a PET scan. Your doctor may also:

- Use tests to eliminate other causes of memory loss and confusion
- Look at the pattern of memory loss and the person's awareness of the changes
- Get a list of medicines and information from the family
- Do a physical exam
- Check the person's mental status by asking memory and thinking questions

There is no cure for Alzheimer's Disease, and it will not go away. Medicines may help with some of the signs or delay the progress of the disease. Other medicines can treat problems with sleeping, depression or nervousness. Exercise, good nutrition and social activity are also important.

For more information and support contact:

- **Alzheimer's Association**, 24-Hour Helpline 800-272-3900, www.alz.org
- **Alzheimer's Foundation of America**, 866-232-8484, www.alzfdn.org