



Alzheimer's Awareness

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Currently, more than six million Americans have Alzheimer's Disease. By 2050, it is expected that this number will balloon to over twelve million. Given the aging population, it is important to learn more about this disease. Prevalence rates are higher in women and in Black and Hispanic populations, compared to White populations. Many people with Alzheimer's, especially later in the progression of the disease, may not realize they are impaired or have insight into what is happening to them.

The Alzheimer's Foundation of America defines Alzheimer's as "a type of dementia that affects memory, thinking and behavior. Symptoms eventually grow severe enough to interfere with daily tasks." Alzheimer's is not a "normal" part of aging, and it is more than memory loss. Symptoms that emerge later are not typically thought of as Alzheimer's symptoms but are an important hallmark of the progression of the disease. Warning signs of Alzheimer's include:

- Memory loss that impairs functioning
- Challenges in planning or solving problems
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks
- Confusion regarding time or place
- Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships
- New problems with words in speaking or writing
- Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
- Decreased or poor judgment
- Withdrawal from work or social activities
- Changes in mood or personality

Symptoms are often individualized and may not emerge in any order, though issues with memory are often the first noticeable signs. The University of Pennsylvania outlined seven stages of Alzheimer's, though they noted that these stages overlap, and that exact timing and severity varies. The seven stages are:

- Before Symptoms Appear
- Basic Forgetfulness
- Noticeable Memory Difficulties
- More Than Memory Loss
- Decreased Independence
- Severe Symptoms
- Lack of Physical Control

Treatment

There currently is no cure for Alzheimer's Disease. However, there is medication that can be used to potentially slow down the progression of the disease. As Alzheimer's Disease progresses, individuals lose their independence and rely on the care of others. Individuals with Alzheimer's Disease can be cared for by family members, friends, or by staff at places such as an adult day center, nursing home, or hospice.

Educate yourself!

- University of Pennsylvania Alzheimer's Page: <https://www.pennmedicine.org/updates/blogs/neuroscience-blog/blog-list?Topic=Alzheimers%20Disease%20and%20Dementia>
- Alzheimer's Foundation of America: <https://alzfdn.org/>
- CDC Alzheimer's Page: <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/aginginfo/alzheimers.htm>