

Alzheimer's disease



Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging. Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia **and** a progressive disease that

- Begins with mild memory loss
- Can seriously affect a person's ability to carry out daily activities
- Involves parts of the brain that control thought, memory, and language
- May lead to losing the ability to carry on a conversation and respond to the environment

Alzheimer's disease is

- One of the top 10 leading causes of death in the US
- The sixth leading cause of death among US adults
- The fifth leading cause of death among adults aged 65 years or older²

In 2014, an estimated 5 million Americans aged 65 years or older had Alzheimer's disease.³

Death rates for Alzheimer's disease are increasing, unlike heart disease and cancer death rates that are on the decline.⁴ Dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, has been shown to be under-reported in death certificates and therefore the proportion of older people who die from Alzheimer's may be considerably higher.⁵

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Who has Alzheimer's disease

- As of 2014, the last year for which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has data, as many as 5 million Americans were living with Alzheimer's disease.⁶
- The symptoms of the disease can first appear after age 60 and the risk increases with age.
- Younger people may get Alzheimer's disease, but it is less common.
- The number of people living with the disease doubles every 5 years beyond age 65.
- This number is projected to nearly triple to 14 million people by 2060.⁷

Causes and risk factors

Scientists do not yet fully understand what causes Alzheimer's disease. Several factors may play a part, including:

- Age, which is the best known risk factor
- Family history, as researchers believe that genetics may play a role
- Changes in the brain, which can begin years before symptoms appear
- Education, diet, and environment, though scientists continue to study the role these three factors may play
- High blood pressure and high cholesterol, which also can lead to heart disease and stroke

Scientists also believe that physical, mental, and social activities may reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Symptoms

According to the National Institute on Aging, someone with Alzheimer's disease may experience one or more of the following signs:

- Changes in mood, personality, or behavior
- Decreased or poor judgment
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure
- Memory loss that disrupts daily life, such as getting lost in a familiar place or repeating questions
- Misplacing things and being unable to retrace steps to find them
- Trouble handling money and paying bills



Diagnosis

- Having several or even most of the signs listed above does not mean that you have Alzheimer's disease.
- Consult a healthcare provider when you or someone you know has concerns about memory loss, thinking skills, or behavioral changes.
- Some causes for symptoms, such as depression and drug interactions:
 - Are reversible
 - Can be serious
 - Should be identified and treated by a healthcare provider as soon as possible
- Early and accurate diagnosis provides opportunities for you and your family to:
 - Consider or review financial planning
 - Develop advance directives
 - Enroll in clinical trials
 - Anticipate care needs

Treatment

Alzheimer's disease has no known cure. Medical management and treatment can improve the quality of life for:

- Individuals living with Alzheimer's disease
- Caregivers

Treatment addresses several different areas, including:

- Helping people maintain mental function
- Managing behavioral symptoms
- Slowing or delaying the symptoms of the disease

Sources

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3. Kevin A. Matthews et al., "Racial and Ethnic Estimates of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias in the United States (2015–2060) in Adults aged ≥ 65 Years," *Alzheimer's & Dementia* (September 2018), accessed October 19, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jalz.2018.06.3063>.
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6. Kevin A. Matthews et al.
7. Kevin A. Matthews et al.