



Alzheimer's disease involves progressive failure of brain cells. While the triggers and underlying causes of brain cell failure are not yet known, scientists have identified certain risk factors associated with the increased likelihood of developing Alzheimer's disease.

The greatest known risk factor for Alzheimer's is increasing age. The likelihood of developing Alzheimer's doubles about every five years after age 65. After age 85, the risk reaches nearly 50 percent.

Family history is also a risk factor. Research has shown that those who have a parent or other family member with Alzheimer's are more likely to develop the disease. The risk increases if more than one family member has the illness.

If an individual exhibits any of the early signs of the disease listed below, it is important that they be assessed as soon as possible by an Alzheimer's specialist so that treatment can begin.

[Download Alzheimer's Risk/Protective Factor Timeline PDF](#)

TEN WARNING SIGNS OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

The Alzheimer's Association has published the following 10 warning signs of Alzheimer's Disease:

1. **Memory loss.** Forgetting recently learned information is one of the most common early signs of dementia. A person begins to forget more often and is unable to recall the information later.

What's normal? Forgetting names or appointments occasionally.

2. **Difficulty performing familiar tasks.** People with dementia often find it hard to plan or complete everyday tasks. Individuals may lose track of the steps involved in preparing a meal, placing a telephone call or playing a game.

What's normal? Occasionally forgetting why you came into a room or what you planned to say.

3. **Problems with language.** People with Alzheimer's disease often forget simple words or substitute unusual words, making their speech or writing hard to understand. They may be unable to find the toothbrush, for example, and instead ask for "that thing for my mouth."

What's normal? Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.

4. **Disorientation to time and place.** People with Alzheimer's disease can become lost in their own neighborhood, forget where they are and how they got there, and not know how to get back home.

What's normal? Forgetting the day of the week or where you were going.

5. **Poor or decreased judgment.** Those with Alzheimer's may dress inappropriately, wearing several layers on a warm day or little clothing in the cold. They may show poor judgment, like giving away large sums of money to telemarketers.

What's normal? Making a questionable decision from time to time.

6. **Problems with abstract thinking.** Someone with Alzheimer's disease may have unusual difficulty performing complex mental tasks. They may forget what numbers are for and how they should be used.

What's normal? Finding it challenging to balance a checkbook.

7. **Misplacing things.** A person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in unusual places: an iron in the freezer or a wristwatch in the sugar bowl.

What's normal? Misplacing keys or a wallet temporarily.

8. **Changes in mood or behavior.** Someone with Alzheimer's disease may show rapid mood swings – from calm to tears to anger – for no apparent reason.

What's normal? Occasionally feeling sad or moody.

9. **Changes in personality.** The personalities of people with dementia can change dramatically. They may become extremely confused, suspicious, fearful or dependent on a family member.

What's normal? People's personalities do change somewhat with age.

10. **Loss of initiative.** A person with Alzheimer's disease may become very passive, sitting in front of the TV for hours, sleeping more than usual or not wanting to do usual activities.

What's normal? Sometimes feeling tired of work or social obligations.