

10 warning signs of Alzheimer's disease[©]

Memory loss that disrupts everyday life is *not* a normal part of aging. It may be a symptom of dementia (*dih-MEN-shuh*), a gradual and progressive decline in memory, thinking and reasoning skills. The most common cause of dementia is Alzheimer's (*AHLZ-high-merz*) disease, a disorder that results in the loss of brain cells.

This checklist of common symptoms can help you recognize signs of Alzheimer's disease.

- 1 Memory loss
- 2 Difficulty performing familiar tasks
- 3 Problems with language
- 4 Disorientation to time and place
- 5 Poor or decreased judgment
- 6 Problems with abstract thinking
- 7 Misplacing things
- 8 Changes in mood or behavior
- 9 Changes in personality
- 10 Loss of initiative

What's normal – what's not ▶

10 warning signs What's considered

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 to prepare a meal, place a telephone call or play 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 their 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 neighborhoods, 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 about money, like giving away large sums to telemarketers.

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

normal and what's not

6 Problems with abstract thinking
Someone with Alzheimer's disease may have unusual difficulty performing complex mental tasks, like forgetting what numbers are 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 weary of work or social obligations

If you are having many of the 10 warning signs, see a doctor to find the cause. Early diagnosis gives you more opportunity to get treatments and plan for your future. **Your local Alzheimer's Association can help you find the right doctor.**

What's the difference?

Symptoms of Alzheimer's	Memory changes with normal aging
Forgetting whole experiences	Forgetting part of an experience
Rarely able to remember later	Often able to remember later
Gradually unable to follow written/spoken directions	Usually able to follow written/spoken directions
Gradually unable to use notes as reminders	Usually able to use notes as reminders
Gradually unable to care for oneself	Usually able to care for oneself

Join us in the battle to end Alzheimer's

- **Volunteer** at your local Alzheimer's Association
- **Advocate** for more research funding
- **Sign up** for Memory Walk®
- **Donate** to support those living with Alzheimer's, and to advance treatment and prevention strategies

For reliable information and support,
contact the Alzheimer's Association:

1.800.272.3900

www.alz.org