Signs and Symptoms

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

10 Early Signs and Symptoms of Alzheimer's

One symptom that you may have noticed in someone with Alzheimer's disease is that they'll have trouble completing familiar tasks. This can even take the form of not being able to remember the directions to a frequently visited place. Even if it's a trip to the same place to get coffee, someone with Alzheimer's might get lost. As someone with Alzheimer's, you can reduce the risk of this happening by always carrying a map, instructions to a location, or a phone that can provide you with directions. To make sure the address isn't forgotten, make a plan to have a list of all the places you go to normally with the address, phone number, and what you get there. That way you can plan your route ahead of time and write down what you want there somewhere that you'll check when you order. That way you'll be able to know how to get there and what to do when you arrive.

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10 Early Signs and Symptoms of Alzheimer's

EARLY DETECTION MATTERS

Note: This list is for information only and not a substitute for a consultation with a qualified professional.

Have you noticed any of these early warning signs of Alzheimer's?

1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life

What's Typical?
Sometimes forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later.

One of the most common signs of Alzheimer's, especially in the early stages, is forgetting recently learned information. Others include forgetting important dates or events; asking for the same information over and over; relying on memory aides (e.g., reminder notes or electronic devices) or family members for things they used to handle on their own.

2. Challenges in planning or solving problems

Some people may experience changes in their ability to develop and follow a plan or work with numbers. They may have trouble following a familiar recipe or keeping track of monthly bills. They may have difficulty concentrating and take much longer to do things than they did before.

What's Typical?
Making occasional errors when balancing a checkbook.

3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure

What's Typical?
Occasionally needing help to use the settings on a microwave or to record a television show.

People with Alzheimer's often find it hard to complete daily tasks. Sometimes, people may have trouble driving to a familiar location, managing a budget at work or remembering the rules of a favorite game.

4. Confusion with time or place

People with Alzheimer's can lose track of dates, seasons and the passage of time. They may have trouble understanding something if it is not happening immediately. Sometimes they may forget where they are or how they got there.

What's Typical?
Getting confused about the day of the week but figuring it out later.

5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships

What's Typical?
Vision changes related to cataracts.

For some people, having vision problems is a sign of Alzheimer's. They may have difficulty reading, judging distance and determining color or contrast. In terms of perception, they may pass a mirror and think someone else is in the room. They may not recognize their own reflection.

6. New problems with words in speaking or writing

People with Alzheimer's may have trouble following or joining a conversation. They may stop in the middle of a conversation and have no idea how to continue or they may repeat themselves. They may struggle with vocabulary, have problems finding the right word or call things by the wrong name (e.g., calling a watch a "hand clock").

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

7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps

What's Typical?
Misplacing things from time to time, such as a pair of glasses or the remote control.

A person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in unusual places. They may lose things and be unable to go back over their steps to find them again. Sometimes, they may accuse others of stealing. This may occur more frequently over time.

8. Decreased or poor judgment

People with Alzheimer's may experience changes in judgment or decision making. For example, they may use poor judgment when dealing with money, giving large amounts to telemarketers. They may pay less attention to grooming or keeping themselves clean.

What's Typical?
Making a bad decision once in a while.

9. Withdrawal from work or social activities

What's Typical?
Sometimes feeling weary of work, family and social obligations.

A person with Alzheimer's may start to remove themselves from hobbies, social activities, work projects or sports. They may have trouble keeping up with a favorite sports team or remembering how to complete a favorite hobby. They may also avoid being social because of the changes they have experienced.

10. Changes in mood and personality

The mood and personalities of people with Alzheimer's can change. They can become confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful or anxious. They may be easily upset at home, at work, with friends or in places where they are out of their comfort zone.

What's Typical?
Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.

If you have questions about any of these warning signs, the Alzheimer's Association recommends consulting a physician. Early diagnosis provides the best opportunities for treatment, support and future planning.

For more information, go to alz.org/10signs or call 800.272.3900

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