ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

Call Our 24/7 Helpline

800.272.3900

https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/10_signs

10 Early Signs and Symptoms of Alzheimer's and Dementia

Memory loss that disrupts daily life may be a symptom of Alzheimer's or other dementia. Alzheimer's is a brain disease that causes a slow decline in memory, thinking and reasoning skills. There are 10 warning signs and symptoms. If you notice any of them, don't ignore them. Schedule an appointment with your doctor.

The Alzheimer's Association is here to help any time, any day of the year. Call our free 24/7 Helpline at 800.272.3900 to talk to a live person who can answer your questions. Not sure what to ask or where to start? That's okay, too. Just give us a call and we'll guide you from there.



1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life

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

What's a typical age-related change?

Sometimes forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later.

2. Challenges in planning or solving problems

Some people living with changes in their memory due to Alzheimer's or other dementia 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 a typical age-related change?

Making occasional errors when managing finances or household bills.

3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks

People living with memory changes from Alzheimer's or other dementia often find it hard to complete daily tasks. Sometimes they may have trouble driving to a familiar location, organizing a grocery list or remembering the rules of a favorite game.

What's a typical age-related change?

Occasionally needing help to use microwave settings or to record a TV show.

Talk with a Dementia Expert Now 24/7 Helpline 800.272.3900

4. Confusion with time or place

People living with Alzheimer's or other dementia 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 a typical age-related change?

Getting confused about the day of the week but figuring it out later.

5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships

Some people living with Alzheimer's or other dementia could experience vision changes. This may lead to difficulty with balance or trouble reading. They may also have problems judging distance and determining color or contrast, causing issues with driving.

What's a typical age-related change?

Vision changes related to cataracts.

6. New problems with words in speaking or writing

People living with Alzheimer's or other dementia 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 trouble naming a familiar object or use the wrong name (e.g., calling a "watch" a "hand-clock").

What's a typical age-related change?

Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.

7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps

A person living with Alzheimer's or other dementia may put things in unusual places. They may lose things and be unable to go back over their steps to find them again. He or she may accuse others of stealing, especially as the disease progresses.

What's a typical age-related change?

Misplacing things from time to time and retracing steps to find them.

8. Decreased or poor judgment

Individuals living with Alzheimer's or other dementia may experience changes in judgment or decision-making. For example, they may use poor judgment when dealing with money or pay less attention to grooming or keeping themselves clean.

What's a typical age-related change?

Making a bad decision or mistake once in a while, like neglecting to change the oil in the car.

9. Withdrawal from work or social activities

A person living with Alzheimer’s or other dementia may experience changes in the ability to hold or follow a conversation. As a result, they may withdraw from hobbies, social activities or other engagements. They may have trouble keeping up with a favorite team or activity.

What's a typical age-related change?

Sometimes feeling uninterested in family or social obligations.

10. Changes in mood and personality

Individuals living with Alzheimer’s or other dementia may experience mood and personality changes. They can become confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful or anxious. They may be easily upset at home, with friends or when out of their comfort zone.

What's a typical age-related change?

Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.

When to seek medical advice.

If you notice one or more signs in yourself or another person, it can be difficult to know what to do. It’s natural to feel uncertain or nervous about discussing these changes with others. Voicing worries about your own health might make them seem more “real.” Or, you may fear upsetting someone by sharing observations about changes in his or her abilities or behavior. However, these are significant health concerns that should be evaluated by a doctor, and it’s important to take action to figure out what’s going on.

What is the difference between Alzheimer’s and typical age-related changes?

Signs of Alzheimer's and Dementia	Typical Age-Related Changes
Poor judgment and decision-making	Making a bad decision once in a while
Inability to manage a budget	Missing a monthly payment
Losing track of the date or the season	Forgetting which day it is and remembering it later
Difficulty having a conversation	Sometimes forgetting which word to use
Misplacing things and being unable to retrace steps to find them	Losing things from time to time

What to do if you notice these signs

If you notice any of the 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's in yourself or someone you know, don't ignore them. Schedule an appointment with your doctor.

With early detection, you can explore treatments that may provide some relief of symptoms and help you maintain a level of independence longer.