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Alzheimer's

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Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia, a general term for memory loss and other cognitive abilities serious enough to interfere with daily life. Symptoms usually develop slowly and get worse over time, becoming severe enough to interfere with daily tasks. The greatest known risk factor is increasing age, and the majority of people with Alzheimer's are 65 and older. However, approximately 200,000 Americans under the age of 65 have younger-onset Alzheimer's disease (also known as early-onset Alzheimer's).

The most common early symptom of Alzheimer's is difficulty remembering newly learned information because Alzheimer's changes typically begin in the part of the brain that affects learning. People with memory loss or other possible signs of Alzheimer's may find it hard to recognize they have a problem. Signs of dementia may be more obvious to family members or friends. Anyone experiencing dementia-like symptoms should see a doctor as soon as possible.

10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

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 for the same information repeatedly, 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.

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.

3. Difficulty Completing Familiar Tasks at Home, Work or Leisure



People with Alzheimer's disease often find it hard to complete daily tasks. Sometimes they 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.

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5. Trouble Understanding Visual Images and Spatial Relationships



For some people, having vision problems is a sign of Alzheimer's. They may have difficulty reading, judging distance and determining color or contrast, which may cause problems with driving.

6. New Problems With Words in Speaking or Writing



People with Alzheimer's disease 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").

7. Misplacing Things and Losing the Ability to Retrace Steps



A person with Alzheimer's 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.

9. Withdrawal From Work or Social Activities



A person with Alzheimer's disease may start to remove themselves from hobbies, social activities, work projects or sports. They may have trouble keeping up with a favorite 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.



Resources:

- "What is Alzheimer's" by Alzheimer's Association (2017) Retrieved 9-27-17 from http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_what_is_alzheimers.asp
- "Stages of Alzheimer's by Alzheimer's Association" (2017) Retrieved 9-27-17 from http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_stages_of_alzheimers.asp
- "10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease" by Alzheimer's Association (2017) Retrieved 9-27-17 from <http://www.alz.org/national/documents/tenwarnsigns.pdf>

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