



Alzheimer's Disease International

UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

If you or a loved one have concerns about memory loss or other symptoms of Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia, it is important to be evaluated by a physician. Symptoms of Alzheimer's disease vary as people progress through the stages of the disease and differ from person to person.

Early symptoms of the disease are often confused with early signs of aging; however, there is a difference between normal changes in memory and the type of memory loss associated with Alzheimer's disease. In order to discern normal changes in memory from early Alzheimer's disease symptoms, keep in mind, everyone experiences temporary memory lapses. Memory loss occurs when the information does not return at a later time, even when prompted by others. A true decline is a change in your normal pattern, such as forgetting important appointments or engagements.

It is helpful to gauge the severity of symptoms. Not everyone will experience all these symptoms or in this order. This is an overview of symptoms to help you identify a pattern before taking the questionnaire below. Circle any of the symptoms below that you or a loved one may be currently experiencing.

- > **Mild Symptoms:** getting lost in familiar places, trouble handling money and paying bills, repeating questions, taking longer to complete normal daily tasks, poor judgment, losing things or misplacing them in odd places, mood and personality changes.¹
- > **Moderate Symptoms:** increased memory loss and disorientation, problems recognizing family and friends, difficulty carrying out tasks that involve multiple steps (such as getting dressed), problems coping with new situations, hallucinations, delusions, paranoia, impulsive behaviour.¹
- > **Severe Symptoms:** inability to communicate effectively, confused periods, difficulty swallowing, difficulty feeding oneself, dependence for hygiene, wandering, losing control of bowel and bladder.¹

If you're unsure whether you or a loved one may be experiencing the signs or symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, this Patient / Caregiver Questionnaire may help to inform your decision on when it's time to make an appointment with a doctor.

While there is no cure for Alzheimer's disease, there are many benefits to obtaining an early diagnosis. Dementia is under-diagnosed worldwide, and when a diagnosis is made, it is typically at a relatively late stage in the disease process. An early and accurate diagnosis can help patients and families plan for the future, make living arrangements, take care of financial and legal matters, develop support networks and create the option to participate in clinical trials.^{2,3}

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Choose “Yes,” “No” or “Not Sure” as your answer to the following 10 questions. Be sure to answer honestly. An accurate patient self-assessment or caregiver assessment may help better inform physician decisions as he or she evaluates patients for possible signs of Alzheimer’s disease.

1. Are you or your loved one 65 years of age or older?	Yes	No	
2. Are you or your loved one experiencing difficulties completing familiar tasks (e.g., driving to a familiar location or following a familiar recipe)?	Yes	No	Not Sure
3. Do you or your loved one repeat the same question(s) multiple times?	Yes	No	Not Sure
4. Are you or your loved one having trouble managing financial affairs (e.g., balancing checkbook, paying bills, etc.), which has not typically occurred in the past?	Yes	No	Not Sure
5. Do you or your loved one have trouble remembering appointments, annual occasions or holidays?	Yes	No	Not Sure
6. Do you or your loved one often misplace his/her possessions or unknowingly store them in unusual places?	Yes	No	Not Sure
7. Have you or your loved one become more removed from social activities?	Yes	No	Not Sure
8. Have you or your loved one experienced difficulties keeping up with a favorite sports team or remembering the rules to a favorite game?	Yes	No	Not Sure
9. Are you or your loved one easily frustrated at home or work, which has not typically occurred in the past?	Yes	No	Not Sure
10. Do you or your loved one have trouble remembering common words or names, which has not typically occurred in the past?	Yes	No	Not Sure

If you answered “yes” to more than two questions, you may want to consider making an appointment with a doctor to determine the likely cause of symptoms. Your doctor will make a judgment about whether Alzheimer’s disease is the most likely cause of your or a loved one’s symptoms, based on the information you provide and results of various tests that can help clarify the diagnosis. However, it is important to remember that a diagnosis cannot be made in one doctor’s visit and the process may require several follow-up evaluations over a long period of time.

If you’re unsure what type of information is important to a doctor, download the **Patient / Caregiver Journal on the Alzheimer’s Disease International website**. The Patient / Caregiver Journal was designed help you track daily behaviours, activities, medication use and other important information, so you can make the most out of your upcoming doctor’s appointment for you or your loved one.

1. About Alzheimer’s Disease: Symptoms. National Institute on Aging. <http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/topics/symptoms>. Accessed August 28, 2013.
 2. Alzheimer’s Disease International. World Alzheimer Report 2011. <http://www.alz.co.uk/research/WorldAlzheimerReport2011.pdf>. Published September 2011. Accessed August 28, 2013.
 3. Alzheimer’s Association. Alzheimer’s Association report: 2011 Alzheimer’s disease facts and figures. *Alzheimers Dement.* 2011;7:208-244.

