



Alzheimer's Disease

What is Alzheimer's Disease?

- The most common form of dementia.
- A progressive disease beginning with mild memory loss possibly leading to loss of the ability to carry on a conversation and respond to the environment.
- Involves parts of the brain that control thought, memory, and language.
- Can seriously affect a person's ability to carry out daily activities.

Although scientists are learning more every day, right now, they still do not know what causes Alzheimer's disease.


Who has Alzheimer's Disease?

- In 2013, as many as 5 million Americans were living with Alzheimer's disease.¹
- The symptoms of the disease first appear after age 60 and the risk increases with age.
- Younger people may get Alzheimer's disease, but it is less common.
- The number of people with the disease doubles every 5 years beyond age 65.
- By 2050, this number is projected to rise to 14 million, a nearly three-fold increase.¹



What is known about Alzheimer's Disease?

Scientists do not yet fully understand what causes Alzheimer's disease. There probably is not one single cause, but several factors that affect each person differently.

- Age is the best known risk factor for Alzheimer's disease.
- Family history—researchers believe that genetics may play a role in developing Alzheimer's disease.
- Changes in the brain can begin years before the first symptoms appear.
- Researchers are studying whether education, diet, and environment play a role in developing Alzheimer's disease.
- Scientists are finding more evidence that some of the risk factors for heart disease and stroke, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and low levels of the vitamin folate may also increase the risk of Alzheimer's disease.
- Evidence is also growing for physical, mental, and social activities as protective factors against Alzheimer's disease.
- [Learn more about current research in this area](http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/publication/2012-2013-alzheimers-disease-progress-report/)
(<http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/publication/2012-2013-alzheimers-disease-progress-report/>) 
(<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>).

How do I know if it's Alzheimer's disease?

Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging.

Memory problems are typically one of the first warning signs of cognitive loss.

According to the National Institute on Aging, in addition to memory problems, someone with Alzheimer's disease may experience one or more of the following signs:



- Gets lost.
- Has trouble handling money and paying bills.
- Repeats questions.
- Takes longer to complete normal daily tasks.
- Displays poor judgment.
- Loses things or misplacing them in odd places.
- Displays mood and personality changes.

[Learn more about the signs of Alzheimer's disease](http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/publication/understanding-alzheimers-disease/what-are-signs-alzheimers-disease)

(<http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/publication/understanding-alzheimers-disease/what-are-signs-alzheimers-disease>) [🔗 \(http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html).

If you or someone you know has several or even most of the signs listed above, it does not mean that you or they have Alzheimer's disease. It is important to consult a health care provider when you or someone you know has concerns about memory loss, thinking skills, or behavioral changes.

- Some causes for symptoms, such as depression and drug interactions, are reversible. However, they can be serious and should be identified and treated by a health care provider as soon as possible.
- Early and accurate diagnosis provides opportunities for you and your family to consider or review financial planning, develop advance directives, enroll in clinical trials, and anticipate care needs.

How is Alzheimer's disease treated?

Although there is no known cure for Alzheimer's disease, active medical management can improve the quality of life for individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers.

Treatment focuses on several different aspects:

- Helping people maintain mental function.
- Managing behavioral symptoms.
- Slowing or delaying the symptoms of the disease.

Visit the [National Institute on Aging for more information](http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/topics/treatment)

(<http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/topics/treatment>) [🔗 \(http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html).

Support for family and friends

Currently, the vast majority of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease are cared for at home by family members.



Caregiving can have positive aspects for the caregiver as well as the person being cared for. It may bring personal fulfillment to the caregiver, such as satisfaction from helping a family member or friend, and lead to the development of new skills and improved family relationships.

Although most people willingly provide care to their loved ones and friends, caring for a person with Alzheimer's disease at home is a difficult task and can become overwhelming at times. Each day brings new challenges as the caregiver copes with changing levels of ability and new patterns of behavior. As the disease gets worse, people living with Alzheimer's disease often need more intensive care.

What is the burden of Alzheimer's disease in the United States?

Alzheimer's disease is

- One of the top 10 leading causes of death in the United States.²
- The 6th leading cause of death among US adults.
- The 5th leading cause of death among adults aged 65–85 years.³




In 2013, an estimated 5 million Americans aged 65 years or older had Alzheimer's disease.¹ This number may triple to as high as 13.8 million people by 2050.¹

In 2010, the costs were projected to fall between \$159 and \$215 billion.⁴ By 2040, these costs are projected to jump to between \$379 and more than \$500 billion annually.⁴

Death rates for Alzheimer's disease are increasing, unlike heart disease and cancer death rates that are on the decline.⁵ Dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, has been shown to be underreported in death certificates and therefore the proportion of older people who die from Alzheimer's may be considerably higher.⁶

Resources on Aging, Alzheimer's Disease and Cognitive Health









Aging

- [CDC Healthy Aging Program \(/aging\)](#)
- [National Institute on Aging \(http://www.nia.nih.gov/\)](http://www.nia.nih.gov/) 
(<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)
- [The National Library of Medicine](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/alzheimersdisease.html#cat11)
(<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/alzheimersdisease.html#cat11>) 
(<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)
- [Administration for Community Living \(http://acl.gov/index.aspx\)](http://acl.gov/index.aspx) 
(<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)

CDC Healthy Brain Initiative

- [The Healthy Brain Initiative \(/aging/healthybrain/index.htm\)](#)
- [The Healthy Brain Initiative \(/aging/healthybrain/roadmap.htm\)](#)

Other Alzheimer's Disease and Cognitive Health Resources

- [2012–2013 Alzheimer's Disease Progress Report](http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/publication/2012-2013-alzheimers-disease-progress-report/)
(<http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/publication/2012-2013-alzheimers-disease-progress-report/>) 
(<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)
- [National Institute on Aging](http://www.nia.nih.gov) (<http://www.nia.nih.gov>)  (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)
- [NIH Senior Health](http://nihseniorhealth.gov) (<http://nihseniorhealth.gov>)  (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)
- [Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral \(ADEAR\) Center](http://www.nia.nih.gov/Alzheimers)
(<http://www.nia.nih.gov/Alzheimers>)  (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)
- [Alzheimer's Association](http://www.alz.org) (<http://www.alz.org/>)  (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)
- [Alzheimer's.gov](http://alzheimers.gov) (<http://alzheimers.gov/>)  (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)
- [Alzheimer's Disease Supportive Services Program](http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/HPW/Alz_Grants/index.aspx)
(http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/AoA_Programs/HPW/Alz_Grants/index.aspx) 
(<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)
- [Brain Health as You Age](http://www.acl.gov/Get_Help/BrainHealth/Index.aspx) (http://www.acl.gov/Get_Help/BrainHealth/Index.aspx) 
(<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)

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3. Heron M. Deaths: leading causes for 2010. National vital statistics reports; vol. 62, no 6. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2013.
4. Hurd MD, Martorell P, Delavande A, Mullen KJ, Langa KM. Monetary costs of dementia in the United States. *NEJM*. 2013;368(14):1326–34.
5. Tejada-Vera B. Mortality from Alzheimer's disease in the United States: data for 2000 and 2010. NCHS data brief, no 116. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2013.
6. James BD, Leurgans SE, Hebert LE, et al. Contribution of Alzheimer disease to mortality in the United States. *Neurology*. 2014;82:1–6.

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