

Alzheimer's Disease Signs & Stages

Signs noticed before being diagnosed with Alzheimer's:

- **Memory Loss.** The most common sign; includes forgetting recently learned information, dates/events, and repeating questions.
- **Communication.** Difficulties in finding the right word to say, substituting vague or wrong words for items they need or when expressing thoughts. Have trouble following conversations.
- **Poor/Loss of Judgment.** Start making unwise choices, don't pay attention to personal hygiene and solving everyday problems becomes difficult
- **Changes in Mood/Personality.** Experiences mood swings within seconds. May become depressed, withdraw themselves, have a hard time trusting family, can be restless and confused.
- **Disorientation.** Lose track of time and can't remember months, days or seasons. May not remember how they got somewhere or how to get home.
- **Problems Performing Familiar Tasks.** Everyday tasks like cooking and cleaning become hard to accomplish because the person either gets confused, forgets, or loses interest.
- **Trouble with Abstract Thinking.** Numbers begin to produce a challenge, making it hard to keep track of finances. Have problems with intellectual thinking and board games.
- **Loss of Drive.** Begin to remove themselves from activities they once enjoyed and skip out on social functions; would rather sleep or watch television.
- **Misplacing Items.** Putting objects in unusual locations, like a toothbrush in the kitchen utensil drawer and not remembering doing it. May accuse others of items being stolen.

The 7 Stages of Alzheimer's Disease, *from the Alzheimer's Association*

Stage 1: No cognitive impairment

Unimpaired individuals experience no memory problems and none are evident to a health care professional during a medical interview.

Stage 2: Very mild decline

Individuals at this stage feel as if they have memory lapses, forgetting familiar words or names or the location of keys, eyeglasses or other everyday objects. Not yet evident during a medical examination.

Stage 3: Mild cognitive decline

Friends, family or co-workers begin to notice deficiencies. Problems with memory or concentration may be measurable in clinical testing or discernible during a detailed medical interview.

Stage 4: Moderate cognitive decline (Mild or early-stage Alzheimer's disease)

At this stage, a careful medical interview detects clear-cut deficiencies in the following areas: decreased knowledge of recent events, decreased capacity to perform complex tasks, such as planning dinner for guests, paying bills, managing finances and reduced memory of personal history.

Stage 5: Moderately severe cognitive decline (Moderate or mid-stage Alzheimer's disease)

Major gaps in memory and deficits in cognitive function emerge. Some assistance with day-to-day activities becomes essential.

Stage 6: Severe cognitive decline (Moderately severe or mid-stage Alzheimer's disease)

Memory difficulties continue to worsen, significant personality changes may emerge, and affected individuals need extensive help with daily activities.

Stage 7: Very severe cognitive decline (Severe or late-stage Alzheimer's disease)

This is the final stage of the disease when individuals lose the ability to respond to their environment, the ability to speak, and, ultimately, the ability to control movement.