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8 Frequently Asked Questions About Alzheimer's Disease

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1. What is the difference between Alzheimer's disease and dementia?

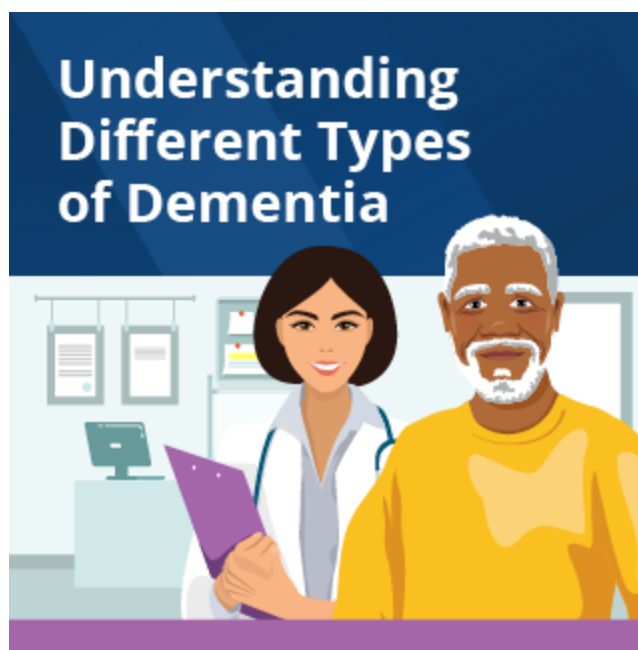
Alzheimer's disease is a type of dementia. Dementia is a loss of thinking, remembering, and reasoning skills that interferes with a person's daily life and activities.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia among older people. Other types of dementia include [frontotemporal disorders](#), [Lewy body dementia](#), and [vascular dementia](#).

Learn more about [Alzheimer's disease](#) and [dementia](#).

2. What are the early signs of Alzheimer's disease?

Memory problems are typically one of the first signs of Alzheimer's disease, though different people may have different initial symptoms. A decline in other aspects of thinking, such as finding the right words, vision/spatial issues, and impaired reasoning or judgment, may also signal the very early stages of Alzheimer's disease.



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[Mild cognitive impairment, or MCI](#), is a condition that can also be an early sign of Alzheimer's disease — but not everyone with MCI will develop Alzheimer's. In addition to memory problems, movement difficulties and problems with the sense of smell have been linked to MCI. If you have MCI, it's important to see a doctor or specialist regularly to monitor any changes in memory or thinking .

Learn more about the [signs of Alzheimer's disease](#).

3. What are the stages of Alzheimer's disease?

Alzheimer's disease progresses in several stages: preclinical, early (also called mild), middle (moderate), and late (severe). During the preclinical stage of Alzheimer's disease, people seem to be symptom-free, but toxic changes are taking place in the brain. A person in the early stage of Alzheimer's may exhibit the signs listed above.

As Alzheimer's disease progresses to the middle stage, memory loss and confusion grow worse, and people may have problems recognizing family and friends. As Alzheimer's disease becomes more severe, people lose the ability to communicate. They may sleep more, lose weight, and have trouble swallowing. Eventually, they need total care.

Learn more about the [stages of Alzheimer's disease](#).

4. What are the causes of Alzheimer's disease?

Scientists do not yet fully understand what causes Alzheimer's disease in most people. In early-onset Alzheimer's, which occurs between a person's 30s and mid-60s, there may be a genetic component. Late-onset Alzheimer's, which usually develops in a person's mid-60s, arises from a complex series of age-related brain changes that occur over decades. The causes probably include a mix of these changes, along with genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors. These factors affect each person differently.

[Down syndrome](#), a genetic condition, increases a person's risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Estimates suggest that 50% or more of people with Down syndrome will develop Alzheimer's disease and may begin to show symptoms in their 40s.

Learn more about the [factors that influence Alzheimer's disease](#).

5. Is Alzheimer's disease hereditary?

Just because a family member has Alzheimer's disease does not mean that you will get it, too. Most cases of Alzheimer's are late-onset. This form of the disease occurs in a person's mid-60s and is not linked to a specific change in genes. However, genetic factors appear to increase a person's risk of developing late-onset Alzheimer's.

Early-onset Alzheimer's disease, which is rare, can be caused by genetic variants, or changes in certain genes. If one of the genetic variants is passed down, the child will usually — but not always — have the disease. For other cases of early-onset Alzheimer's, research shows other genetic components are involved.

Learn more about [assessing risk for Alzheimer's disease](#).

6. Is there a cure for Alzheimer's disease?

Currently, there is no cure for Alzheimer's disease. Some sources claim that products such as coconut oil or dietary supplements can cure or delay Alzheimer's. However, there is no scientific evidence to support these claims.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved several drugs to treat people with Alzheimer's disease, and certain medicines and interventions may help control behavioral symptoms.

Learn more about how [Alzheimer's disease is treated](#).

Scientists are developing and testing possible new treatments for Alzheimer's. [Learn more about taking part in clinical trials](#) that help scientists learn about the brain in healthy aging and what happens in Alzheimer's and other dementias. Results of these trials are used to improve diagnosis, treatment, and prevention methods.

7. Is there a way to prevent Alzheimer's disease?

Currently, there is no definitive evidence about what can prevent Alzheimer's disease or age-related cognitive decline. What we do know is that a healthy lifestyle — one that includes a healthy diet, physical activity, appropriate weight, and control of high blood pressure — can lower the risk of certain chronic diseases and boost overall health and well-being. Scientists are very interested in the possibility that a healthy lifestyle might delay, slow down, or even prevent Alzheimer's. They are also studying the role of social activity and intellectual stimulation in Alzheimer's disease risk.

Learn more about [cognitive health and older adults](#) and [reducing your risk for Alzheimer's disease](#).

8. Where can I find financial help for people with Alzheimer's disease or their caregivers?

There are several possible sources of financial help, depending on your situation. Looking into programs offered by the government is a great place to start. Several federal and state programs provide help with health care-related costs. Read [Paying for Care](#) for information on government programs and other payment sources.

The following organizations also offer assistance with finding financial help:

[Eldercare Locator](#)

800-677-1116

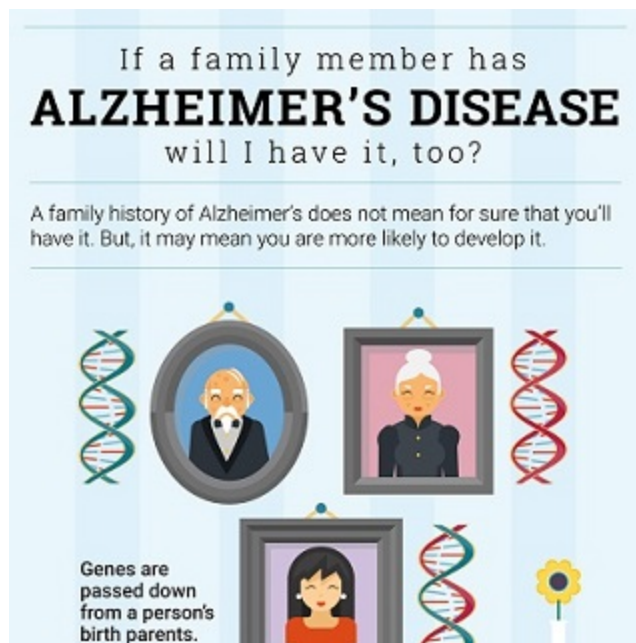
[National Council on Aging](#)

571-527-3900

[Family Caregiver Alliance](#)

800-445-8106

For more information about Alzheimer's



[Read and share this infographic](#) to learn more about how Alzheimer's disease runs in families.

NIA Alzheimer's and related Dementias Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center

800-438-4380

adear@nia.nih.govwww.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers

The NIA ADEAR Center offers information and free print publications about Alzheimer's and related dementias for families, caregivers, and health professionals. ADEAR Center staff answer telephone, email, and written requests and make referrals to local and national resources.

Alzheimers.govwww.alzheimers.gov

Explore the Alzheimers.gov website for information and resources on Alzheimer's and related dementias from across the federal government.

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