

Symptoms

Alzheimer's disease

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The symptoms of Alzheimer's disease progress over several years. How quickly the symptoms progress is different in each person.

Certain medicines and other conditions such as infection or stroke can make symptoms worse.

If you have Alzheimer's disease and your symptoms are getting worse very quickly, talk to your GP.

Stages of Alzheimer's disease

It can be useful to think about the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease in 3 stages.

Early symptoms

In the early stages, the main symptom of Alzheimer's disease is memory lapses.

For example, if you have early Alzheimer's disease you may:

- forget about recent conversations or events
- misplace items
- forget the names of places and objects
- have trouble thinking of the right word
- repeat questions
- show poor judgement or find it harder to make decisions
- become less flexible and more hesitant to try new things

There are often signs of mood changes, such as:

- increasing anxiety

- increasing agitation
- less interest in events and hobbies

Mid-stage symptoms

As Alzheimer's disease develops, memory problems will get worse.

You may find it more difficult to remember the names of people you know. You may also struggle to recognise family and friends.

Other symptoms may also develop, such as:

- becoming more confused
- obsessive, repetitive or impulsive behaviour
- believing things that are untrue (delusions)
- feeling paranoid and suspicious about carers or family members
- seeing or hearing things that other people do not (hallucinations)
- problems with speech or language (aphasia)
- disturbed sleep
- changes in mood - mood swings, depression, feeling increasingly anxious, frustrated or agitated
- difficulty with spatial tasks, such as judging distances

Some people with Alzheimer's disease also have [vascular dementia](#). Both types of dementia are quite common.

By this stage, you may need support to help you with everyday living. For example, you may need help eating, washing, getting dressed and using the toilet.

Later symptoms

In the later stages of Alzheimer's disease, the symptoms become more severe. This can be distressing for you, your carers, friends and family.

Hallucinations and delusions may come and go. This can get worse as the condition progresses.

You may become aggressive and suspicious of people around you.

You may also develop other symptoms as the disease progresses, such as:

- difficulty eating and swallowing (dysphagia)
- difficulty changing position or moving around without help
- weight loss – sometimes severe
- unintentional peeing (urinary incontinence) or pooing (bowel incontinence)
- gradual loss of speech
- significant problems with short and long-term memory

In the severe stages, you may need full-time support with eating, moving and personal care.

When to see your GP

If you're worried about your memory or think you may have dementia, speak to your GP.

You may be worried about someone else's memory problems. If so, encourage them to make an appointment. You might suggest going along with them.

Dementia is not the only cause of memory problems. Depression, stress, medicines or other health problems can also be the cause.

Your GP can carry out some simple checks to try to find out what the cause may be. If it is dementia, there are medicines, therapies and support available. These can help you to live your life the way you want to for as long as possible.

Your GP can also refer you to a specialist for more tests if necessary.

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