



[Home](#) → [Health Topics](#) → Alzheimer's Disease

URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/alzheimersdisease.html>

Alzheimer's Disease

Also called: AD

What is Alzheimer's disease?

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most common form of **dementia** [<https://medlineplus.gov/dementia.html>] among older people. Dementia is a brain disorder that seriously affects thinking and memory skills. If you have AD, it can impair your ability to reason or learn new skills until it becomes difficult to complete daily activities.

AD begins slowly over many years. It first involves the parts of the brain that control thought, memory, and language. It may be mistaken for normal memory changes with aging. However, AD is not a normal part of aging. The brain changes from the disease lead to symptoms that get worse over time.

What are the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease?

People with AD may have trouble remembering recent events or the names of people they know. Behavior may vary from person to person and day to day. AD progresses in stages. **Late-onset AD** occurs in adults aged 65 and older, which is when most people develop the disease. **Early-onset AD** happens before age 65, which is not common.

Some symptoms of AD can include:

- Getting lost in familiar places
- Repeating the same question
- Not recognizing family members
- Having trouble speaking, reading, or writing
- Not taking care of yourself, such as not bathing or eating poorly

In AD, over time, symptoms get worse. Later on, people with AD may become anxious or aggressive or wander away from home. Eventually, they need total care. This can cause great stress for family members who must **care** [<https://medlineplus.gov/alzheimerscaregivers.html>] for them.

Who is more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease?

Researchers don't fully understand what causes AD. Age is the biggest risk factor. Your risk is also higher if a family member has had the disease. Although people who develop Alzheimer's don't always have a history of the disease in their families.

Researchers believe the causes of AD may be a combination of age-related changes in the brain, along with genetic, health, and lifestyle factors. Some medical conditions that are associated with a higher risk of AD include:

- Hearing loss [<https://medlineplus.gov/hearingdisordersanddeafness.html>]
- Depression [<https://medlineplus.gov/depression.html>]
- Mild cognitive impairment [<https://medlineplus.gov/mildcognitiveimpairment.html>]
- Concussion [<https://medlineplus.gov/concussion.html>] or other traumatic brain injury [<https://medlineplus.gov/traumaticbraininjury.html>] (TBI)

A related problem, mild cognitive impairment (MCI), causes more memory problems than normal for people of the same age. Many, but not all, people with MCI will develop AD.

How is Alzheimer's disease diagnosed?

Some health conditions can cause memory loss or symptoms like AD. Talk with your health care provider if you're having noticeable changes in your memory. To determine if your symptoms are related to AD and not normal aging or another health condition, your provider may:

- Review your medical history and any medicines you're taking
- Conduct tests to check your memory, thinking, and problem-solving skills
- Ask about changes in behavior or personality
- Do tests to rule out any medical or mental health conditions
- Refer you to a provider that specializes in caring for older adults
- Recommend a neurologist, a doctor who specializes in treating diseases of the brain and nervous system

What are the treatments for Alzheimer's disease?

No treatment can stop the disease. However, some medicines may help keep symptoms from getting worse for a limited time.





Can Alzheimer's disease be prevented?

You can't change some risk factors, like your age. But changing certain lifestyle factors may promote your brain health and help you live a healthier lifestyle overall. This can include to:

- Manage chronic health issues such as high blood pressure [<https://medlineplus.gov/highbloodpressure.html>] or hearing loss
- Get regular physical activity [<https://medlineplus.gov/exerciseandphysicalfitness.html>]
- Eat a healthy diet [<https://medlineplus.gov/nutrition.html>]
- Quit smoking [<https://medlineplus.gov/quittingsmoking.html>] (or don't start)
- Get enough sleep [<https://medlineplus.gov/healthysleep.html>]
- Develop strong social connections [<https://medlineplus.gov/howtoimprovementalhealth.html>]

NIH: National Institute on Aging


Start Here

- Alzheimer's and Dementia [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-and-dementia>]  (National Institute on Aging)
- Alzheimer's Disease [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/alzheimers-disease>]  (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)
- Alzheimer's Disease Fact Sheet [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-and-dementia/alzheimers-disease-fact-sheet>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/enfermedad-alzheimer/enfermedad-alzheimer>]
- What Is Alzheimer's Disease? [<https://www.alzheimers.gov/alzheimers-dementias/alzheimers-disease>] (Department of Health and Human Services)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.alzheimers.gov/es/alzheimer-demencias/enfermedad-alzheimer>]
- What Is Alzheimer's Disease? [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-and-dementia/what-alzheimers-disease>]  (National Institute on Aging)



Symptoms

- 10 Early Signs and Symptoms of Alzheimer's [https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/10_signs] (Alzheimer's Association)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.alz.org/alzheimer-demencia/las-10-senales>]
- What Are the Signs of Alzheimer's Disease? [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-symptoms-and-diagnosis/what-are-signs-alzheimers-disease>]  (National Institute on Aging)





Diagnosis and Tests

- How is Alzheimer's Disease Diagnosed? [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-symptoms-and-diagnosis/how-alzheimers-disease-diagnosed>]  (National Institute on Aging)






Prevention and Risk Factors

- Brain Health [https://www.alz.org/help-support/brain_health] (Alzheimer's Association)
- Thinking About Your Risk for Alzheimer's Disease? Five Questions To Consider [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-causes-and-risk-factors/thinking-about-your-risk-alzheimers-disease-five>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/alzheimer-causas-factores-riesgo/piensa-puede-correr-riesgo-desarrollar-enfermedad>]
- What Do We Know about Diet and Prevention of Alzheimer's Disease? [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-and-dementia/what-do-we-know-about-diet-and-prevention-alzheimers-disease>]  (National Institute on Aging)

Treatments and Therapies

- 7 Things To Know About Dietary Supplements for Cognitive Function, Dementia, and Alzheimer's Disease [<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/tips/things-to-know-about-dietary-supplements-for-cognitive-function-dementia-and-alzheimers-disease>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)
- Alzheimer's Disease at a Glance [<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-disease-at-a-glance>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)
- Alzheimer's Treatment [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-treatment>]  (National Institute on Aging)
- How Is Alzheimer's Disease Treated? [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-treatment/how-alzheimers-disease-treated>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/cuidado-medico-enfermedad-alzheimer/como-se-trata-enfermedad-alzheimer>]
- Treatments for Sleep Changes [<https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/treatments/for-sleep-changes>] (Alzheimer's Association)






Living With

- Alzheimer's Caregivers: MedlinePlus Health Topic [<https://medlineplus.gov/alzheimerscaregivers.html>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/alzheimerscaregivers.html>]
- Coping with Agitation, Aggression, and Sundowning in Alzheimer's Disease [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-changes-behavior-and-communication/coping-agitation-aggression-and-sundowning>]   (National Institute on Aging)
- Diet, Exercise, and Health [<https://www.alzinfo.org/articles/diet-exercise-health/>] (Fisher Center for Alzheimer's Research Foundation)
- Next Steps after an Alzheimer's Diagnosis [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-treatment/next-steps-after-alzheimers-diagnosis>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/cuidado-medico-enfermedad-alzheimer/pasos-seguir-despues-ser-agnosticado-enfermedad>]
- Resources for People with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias [<https://www.alzheimers.gov/life-with-dementia/resources-dementia>] (Department of Health and Human Services)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.alzheimers.gov/es/como-vivir-demencia/recursos-demencia>]
- Stages and Behaviors [<https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/stages-behaviors>] (Alzheimer's Association)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.alz.org/ayuda-y-apoyo/cuidado/comportamientos>]
- Sundowning: Late-Day Confusion [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/alzheimers-disease/expert-answers/sundowning/FAQ-20058511?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/alzheimers-disease/expert-answers/sundowning/faq-20058511?p=1>]
- Tips for Caregivers: Helping People With Alzheimer's Disease Eat Well [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-caregiving/tips-caregivers-helping-people-alzheimers-disease-eat-well>]  (National Institute on Aging)
- Tips for Daily Life [<https://www.alz.org/help-support/i-have-alz/live-well/tips-for-daily-life>] (Alzheimer's Association)


Related Issues


- Alzheimer's Disease in People with Down Syndrome [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-causes-and-risk-factors/alzheimers-disease-people-down-syndrome>]  (National Institute on Aging)
- Alzheimer's Myths [<https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/what-is-alzheimers/myths>] (Alzheimer's Association)
- Alzheimer's Prevention: Does it Exist? [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/alzheimers-disease/expert-answers/alzheimers-prevention/faq-20058140?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/alzheimers-disease/expert-answers/alzheimers-prevention/faq-20058140?p=1>]
- Brain Donation: A Gift for Future Generations [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/brain-donation/brain-donation-gift-future-generations>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/donacion-cerebro/donacion-cerebro-regalo-generaciones-futuras>]
- Depression and Alzheimer's Disease [<https://familydoctor.org/depression-and-alzheimers-disease/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/depresion-y-enfermedad-de-alzheimer/?adfree=true>]
- Posterior Cortical Atrophy [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/posterior-cortical-atrophy/symptoms-causes/syc-20376560?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/posterior-cortical-atrophy/symptoms-causes/syc-20376560?p=1>]
- Understanding Memory Loss: What To Do When You Have Trouble Remembering [<https://order.nia.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2024-08/understanding-memory-loss.pdf>]  (National Institute on Aging) - PDF
- Urinary Incontinence in Older Adults [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/bladder-health-and-incontinence/urinary-incontinence-older-adults>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/incontinencia/incontinencia-urinaria>]
- What Causes Alzheimer's Disease? [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-causes-and-risk-factors/what-causes-alzheimers-disease>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/enfermedad-alzheimer/causa-enfermedad-alzheimer>]

Specifics


- 10 Frequently Asked Questions About Alzheimer's Disease [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-and-dementia/frequently-asked-questions-about-alzheimers-disease>]  **Easy-to-Read** (National Institute on Aging)
- Alzheimer's Caregiving: Coping With Hallucinations, Delusions, and Paranoia [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-changes-behavior-and-communication/alzheimers-caregiving-coping-hallucinations>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/enfermedad-alzheimer/cambios-personalidad-conducta-relacionados-enfermedad-alzheimer>]
- Alzheimer's Caregiving: Managing Personality and Behavior Changes [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-changes-behavior-and-communication/alzheimers-caregiving-managing-personality-and>]  (National Institute on Aging)
- Common Medical Problems in Alzheimer's Disease: Information for Caregivers [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-caregiving/common-medical-problems-alzheimers-disease-information-caregivers>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/cuidado-medico-enfermedad-alzheimer/problemas-medicos-comunes-personas-alzheimer>]
- Communicating With Someone Who Has Alzheimer's Disease [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-changes-behavior-and-communication/communicating-someone-who-has-alzheimers>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/cuidar-familiar-enfermedad-alzheimer/como-comunicarse-persona-tiene-enfermedad-alzheimer>]
- Stages of Alzheimer's [<https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/stages>] (Alzheimer's Association)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.alz.org/alzheimer-demencia/etapas?lang=es-MX>]

Genetics




- Alzheimer disease: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/alzheimers-disease>]  (National Library of Medicine)

Alzheimer's Disease Genetics Fact Sheet [https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-causes-and-risk-factors/alzheimers-disease-genetics-fact-sheet]  (National Institute on Aging)





Also in Spanish [https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/alzheimer-causas-factores-riesgo/genetica-enfermedad-alzheimer]

- If My Parent Has Alzheimer's Disease, Will I Have It, Too? [https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-causes-and-risk-factors/if-my-parent-has-alzheimers-disease-will-i-have-it-too]  **Easy-to-Read Infographic** (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/alzheimer-causas-factores-riesgo/si-uno-mis-padres-tiene-enfermedad-alzheimer-yo-tambien-tendre]



Videos and Tutorials

- Alzheimer disease [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000003.htm]  (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/anatomyvideos/000003.htm]
- How Alzheimer's Changes the Brain [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GXv3mHs9AU&feature=youtu.be]   (National Institute on Aging)

Statistics and Research

- Accurate Blood Test for Alzheimer's Disease [https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2024/10/accurate-blood-test-alzheimer-s-disease]  (National Institutes of Health)
Also in Spanish [https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/un-analisis-de-sangre-preciso-para-detectar-la-enfermedad]
- Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures [https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/facts-figures]  (Alzheimer's Association)
- Earlier Diagnosis [https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/research_progress/earlier-diagnosis] (Alzheimer's Association)
- FastStats: Alzheimer's Disease [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/alzheimers.htm] (National Center for Health Statistics)
- Gene Expression Signatures of Alzheimer's Disease [https://www.nia.nih.gov/news/gene-expression-signatures-alzheimers-disease]  (National Institute on Aging)
- Research on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias [https://www.alzheimers.gov/taking-action/research-activities] (Department of Health and Human Services)
Also in Spanish [https://www.alzheimers.gov/es/acciones/investigaciones]
- Scam Susceptibility May Signal Risk for Cognitive Decline [https://www.nia.nih.gov/news/scam-susceptibility-may-signal-risk-cognitive-decline]  (National Institute on Aging)
- Treatments and Research [https://www.alz.org/help-support/i-have-alz/treatments-research] (Alzheimer's Association)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Alzheimer Disease [https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Alzheimer+Disease%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec]  (National Institutes of Health)
- Find Clinical Trials [https://www.alzheimers.gov/clinical-trials] (Department of Health and Human Services)
- Participating in Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Research [https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/clinical-trials-and-studies/participating-alzheimers-disease-and-related-dementias-research]  (National Institute on Aging)


Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)



- Article: Alzheimer's Association Clinical Practice Guideline on the use of blood-based biomarkers... [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40729527]
- Article: Brexpiprazole's impacts on patients and caregivers in agitation in Alzheimer's dementia. [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40717666]
- Article: Development of AL101 (GSK4527226), a progranulin-elevating monoclonal antibody, as a potential... [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40713730]
- Alzheimer's Disease -- see more articles [https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Alzheimer+Disease%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+OR+%22Alzheimer+Vaccines%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+AND+%28patient+educati

on+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical+trial%5Bpt%5D%29++NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+]





Reference Desk

- Alzheimer's: Glossary [<https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/care-options/glossary>] (Alzheimer's Association)
- Brain Basics: The Life and Death of a Neuron [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/public-education/brain-basics/brain-basics-life-and-death-neuron>]  (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)

Find an Expert

- Alzheimer's Association [<https://www.alz.org/>]
- Alzheimer's Disease Research Centers: National Research Centers, Local Resources [<https://www.alzheimers.gov/taking-action/national-research-centers>] (Department of Health and Human Services)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.alzheimers.gov/es/acciones/centros-nacionales-investigacion>]
- Alzheimers.gov [<https://www.alzheimers.gov/>] (Department of Health and Human Services)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.alzheimers.gov/es>]
- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/>] 
- National Institute on Aging [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol>]

Patient Handouts

- Alzheimer disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000760.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000760.htm>]
- Alzheimer's Caregiving: Bathing, Dressing, and Grooming [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-caregiving/alzheimers-caregiving-bathing-dressing-and-grooming>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/cuidar-familiar-enfermedad-alzheimer/cuidados-persona-enfermedad-alzheimer-bano-vestido>]
- Changes in Intimacy and Sexuality in Alzheimer's Disease [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/sexuality/changes-intimacy-and-sexuality-alzheimers-disease>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/cuidar-familiar-enfermedad-alzheimer/cambios-intimidad-sexualidad-relacionados-enfermedad>]
- Communicating With Someone Who Has Alzheimer's Disease [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-changes-behavior-and-communication/communicating-someone-who-has-alzheimers>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/cuidar-familiar-enfermedad-alzheimer/como-comunicarse-persona-tiene-enfermedad-alzheimer>]
- Helping Family and Friends Understand Alzheimer's Disease [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-and-relationships/helping-family-and-friends-understand-alzheimers-disease>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/enfermedad-alzheimer/como-ayudar-familiares-otros-entender-enfermedad-alzheimer>]
- Mental status testing [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003326.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003326.htm>]



Alzheimer disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000003.htm>]

Alzheimer disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000760.htm>]

Brain PET scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007341.htm>]

Dementia - home care [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007428.htm>]

Mental status testing [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003326.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Alzheimer's Caregivers [<https://medlineplus.gov/alzheimerscaregivers.html>]

Caregivers [<https://medlineplus.gov/caregivers.html>]

Dementia [<https://medlineplus.gov/dementia.html>]

Memory [<https://medlineplus.gov/memory.html>]

Mild Cognitive Impairment [<https://medlineplus.gov/mildcognitiveimpairment.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Alzheimer's Disease* is the National Institute on Aging [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/alzheimersdisease.html>] on *Alzheimer's Disease*

MedlinePlus links to health information from the National Institutes of Health and other federal government agencies. MedlinePlus also links to health information from non-government Web sites. See our **disclaimer** [<https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html>] about external links and our **quality guidelines** [<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>] .

The information on this site should not be used as a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Contact a health care provider if you have questions about your health.

[Learn how to cite this page](#)