

Information for patients
Alzheimer's Disease
10 WARNING SIGNS

Source: Alzheimer Society, www.alzheimer.ca/english/disease/warningsigns.htm

Alzheimer's Disease is the leading cause of dementia — a set of symptoms that includes loss of memory, judgment and reasoning, and changes in mood and behavior.

Review this list — if you notice several symptoms, the person with the symptoms should see a **doctor** for a complete examination.

1. Memory loss that affects day-to-day function

Forgetting appointments, colleagues' names or a friend's phone number and remembering them later is normal. A person with Alzheimer's disease may forget things more often and won't remember them later, especially things that have happened more recently.

2. Difficulty performing familiar tasks

Busy people can be so distracted that they may, for example, leave cooked carrots on the stove and only remember to serve them later. A person with Alzheimer's disease may be unable to prepare any part of a meal or forget they ate it.

3. Problems with language

Everyone has trouble finding the right word sometimes, but a person with Alzheimer's disease may forget simple words or substitute inappropriate words, making his or her sentences difficult to understand.

4. Disorientation of time and place

It's normal to forget the day of the week or your destination — for a moment. But a person with Alzheimer's disease can become lost on their own street, not knowing how they got there or how to get home.

5. Poor or decreased judgment

People may sometimes put off going to a doctor if they have an infection, but eventually seek medical attention. A person with Alzheimer's disease may not recognize the infection as a problem or go to the doctor at all. Or they may dress inappropriately, wearing heavy clothing on a hot day.

6. Problems with abstract thinking

From time to time, people may find balancing a cheque book difficult. Someone with Alzheimer's disease could forget completely what the numbers are and what needs to be done with them. Celebrating a birthday is something many people do, but a person with Alzheimer's disease may not understand what a birthday is.

7. Misplacing things

Anyone can temporarily misplace a wallet or keys. A person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in inappropriate places: an iron in the freezer or a wristwatch in the sugar bowl.

8. Changes in mood or behavior

Everyone becomes sad or moody from time to time. Someone with Alzheimer's disease can exhibit rapid mood swings — from calm to tears to anger — for no apparent reason.

9. Changes in personality

People's personalities can change somewhat with age. But a person with Alzheimer's disease can change dramatically, becoming extremely confused, suspicious or withdrawn. Changes may also include apathy, fearfulness or acting inappropriately.

10. Loss of initiative

It's normal to tire of housework, business activities or social obligations, but most people regain their initiative. A person with Alzheimer's disease may become very passive, and require cues and prompting to become involved.

Reprinted with permission from the Alzheimer Society of Canada and the Alzheimer's Association, U.S..

May be copied and distributed to patients