

Alzheimer's Disease & Aging: Get the Facts by Dr. Brenda Boatswain

This article is taken from the Godsend Psychological Services November 2015 eNewsletter. See any page of this website to sign up for our **free** monthly eNewsletter containing Health news you can use.

I get Forgetful. Do I have Alzheimer's?

Many people have memory loss issues but this does not mean they have Alzheimer's Disease or some other type of dementia.

Alzheimer's Disease gets its name from Dr. Alois Alzheimer, the German psychiatrist that first diagnosed the disease in the early 1900s. Alzheimer's is NOT a normal part of aging.

What is Dementia and What is Alzheimer's?

Dementia is not a specific disease. It is a general term used to describe symptoms that show a decline in one's mental ability, such as memory loss, symptoms that are severe enough to reduce a person's functioning and ability to perform everyday activities.

Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is a progressive disease, where brain cells die, the brain shrinks in size, and dementia symptoms gradually worsen over a number of years until the brain loses nearly all its functions. Many people use the term dementia and Alzheimer's/ Alzheimer's Disease interchangeably because Alzheimer's or Alzheimer's Disease is the most common type of dementia.

- Alzheimer's is the 6th leading cause of death in the United States.
- Survival ranges from 4 to 20 years, depending on age and overall health.
- Every 67 seconds someone is diagnosed with AD.
- 2/3 of those diagnosed are women.
- Latinos and African Americans may be at increased risk.



Know the Signs and Symptoms of AD

The most common early symptom of Alzheimer's is difficulty remembering newly learned information.

In the early stages:

- Memory loss is mild
- Irritability
- Depression & Anxiety

In later stages symptoms may include:

- More severe memory loss & confusion
- Loss of ability to communicate and recognize loved ones
- Loss of ability to care for self
- Anger, Agitation, Aggression
- General emotional distress
- Physical or verbal outbursts

- Restlessness, pacing, wandering, shredding things
- Hallucinations (see, hear, or feel things that are not there)
- Suspicion & Delusions (belief in things that are not real)
- Sleep problems

What are the Risk Factors for AD?

- **Age is the greatest** known risk factor for Alzheimer's
- 1 in 9 people age 65 or older has AD
- Nearly 1 in 3 people age 85 or older has AD
- However, Up to 5 percent of people have early onset Alzheimer's at age 40s or 50s.
- **Genetics** is other major risk factor
- Having a parent, sibling, or child with AD increases your risk.
- The risk increases if more than one family member has AD.
- High blood sugar, high cholesterol, chronic inflammation.
- Major head injury with loss of consciousness.
- Heredity/genetics or environmental factors, or both, may play a role.

What about Treatment?

- Currently, there is no cure for Alzheimer's.
- Early diagnosis is helpful in starting medications such as Namenda to lessen the cognitive symptoms of memory loss, confusion, and problems with thinking and reasoning.
- Early diagnosis helps in starting medication and/or psychotherapy sooner for emotional & behavioral symptoms to slow the disease's progression.
- Researchers worldwide continue to look for new treatments.

How can I Lower my Risk?

- Take care of your heart and you take care of your brain
- Don't smoke
- Keep blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar in check
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Get regular exercise
- Eat a Mediterranean diet which includes whole grains, fruits, vegetables, fish, shellfish, minimal red meat, nuts, olive oil and other healthy fats
- Stay current on scientific research on brain health.

The Take Away:

There are many different causes of memory problems. If you or a loved one is having memory problems, visit a doctor to learn the reason. Some symptoms that are similar to dementia can be reversed. Get checked by your doctor.

Source:

www.alz.org

Note: Information provided in this article is designed to support, not replace the recommendation of your medical doctor or mental health provider.

*Sign up for your free monthly eNewsletter!!