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## Alzheimer's Disease

### What is Alzheimer's Disease?

This is a disease which affects how the brain works. Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia. People with dementia of the Alzheimer's type experience a gradual loss of memory and a decline of other mental functions such as learning, performing routine tasks, using judgment and planning. It can also cause confusion, restlessness and personality changes. It is important to remember that this disease is a medical condition, not a mental illness. It is a progressive condition, which means the symptoms get worse with time.



### Causes of Alzheimer's

Alzheimer's disease is an idiopathic illness. There are no real causes. It may be preceded by stroke or depression, and there are very low incidents of the disease being hereditary.

# Alzheimer's Disease | Clinical Stages

**Stage 1: No Impairment** - During this stage, Alzheimer's disease is not detectable and no memory problems or other symptoms of dementia are evident.

**Stage 2: Very Mild Decline** - The senior may notice minor memory problems or lose things around the house, although not to the point where memory loss can easily be distinguished from normal age related memory loss. The person will still do well on memory tests, and the disease is unlikely to be detected by physicians or loved ones.

**Stage 3: Mild Decline** - At this stage, the friends and family members of the senior may begin to notice memory and cognitive problems. Performance on memory and cognitive tests are affected, and physicians will be able to detect impaired cognitive function. Patients in Stage 3 will have difficulty in many areas including: Finding the right word during conversations, remembering the names of new acquaintances, planning and organizing, as well as losing personal possessions, including valuables.

**Stage 4: Moderate Decline** - During Stage 4, clear cut symptoms of Alzheimer's disease are apparent. Symptoms include: Difficulty with simple arithmetic, forgetting details about their life histories, poor short term memory (for example, they may not recall what they ate for breakfast) and inability to manage finances and pay bills.

**Stage 5: Moderately Severe Decline** - During Stage 5, patients begin to need help with many day to day activities. People in Stage 5 may experience: Significant confusion, inability to recall simple details about themselves, such as their own phone number and difficulty dressing appropriately. On the other hand, patients in Stage 5 maintain a modicum of functionality. They typically can still bathe and toilet independently. They also usually still know their family members and some detail about their personal histories, especially their childhood and youth.

**Stage 6: Severe Decline** - Patients in Stage 6 need constant supervision and frequent professional care. Symptoms include: Confusion or unawareness of environment and surroundings, major personality changes and potential behavior problems, the need for assistance with activities of daily living such as toileting and bathing, inability to recognize faces except closest friends and relatives, inability to remember most details of personal history, loss of bowel and bladder control and wandering.

**Stage 7: Very Severe Decline** - Stage 7 is the final stage of Alzheimer's disease. Because Alzheimer's disease is a terminal illness, patients in Stage 7 are nearing death. Patients lose ability to respond to their environment or communicate. While they may still be able to utter words and phrases, they have no insight into their condition and need assistance with all activities of daily living. In the final stages, patient may lose their ability to swallow.

# Alzheimer's Disease | Diagnosis & Treatment

## Diagnosing

If you suspect someone has development of memory difficulties, they should be evaluated by your physician.

**If you are referred to a neurologist, you can expect the following to take place:**

- 1:** A thorough history will initially be obtained. The physician relies on the caregiver to help with these questions so it is important to accompany the patient to his/her office visit.
- 2:** After the initial history is obtained, the physician may want to obtain further testing to rule out other medical problems which may be causing his/her memory difficulties. This may be achieved through laboratory studies, electroencephalogram or a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan of the brain.
- 3:** Depending on the severity of the patient's memory difficulties, the physician may recommend the patient begin taking medication to try to help improve his/her memory. There are several medications that are available. A four to six week trial is usually performed, and the patient is seen back for a follow up visit to determine if the medication has been helpful. The results of any tests ordered will be reviewed at this follow up visit.
- 4:** The caregiver will be asked to observe the patient between visits to help evaluate for any changes in condition: any worsening or improvement in memory difficulties, changes in behavior, or intolerance to medication.

## Treatment

Although there is no cure for this devastating disease, there are several medications which can offer some improvement in memory and cognitive function. Your physician will discuss the medications and will determine which would be best suited for the patient.

## Resources

**We encourage all patients to access information and learn more about their illness.**

For additional information you may visit our website [www.cnmri.com/alzheimers-dementia/](http://www.cnmri.com/alzheimers-dementia/)



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## AD8 – Brief Informant Interview to Detect Dementia

Remember, “Yes, a change” indicates that you think there has been a change in the last several years cause by cognitive (thinking and memory) problems.

	YES, A Change	NO, No Change	N/A, Don't know
Problems with judgment (e.g. falls for scams, bad financial decisions, buys gifts inappropriate for recipients).			
Reduced interest in hobbies / activities.			
Repeats questions, stories or statements.			
Trouble learning how to use a tool, appliance or gadget (e.g. VCR, computer, microwave, remote control).			
Forgets correct month or year.			
Difficulty handling complicated financial affairs (e.g. balancing checkbook, income taxes, paying bills).			
Difficulty remembering appointments.			
Consistent problems with thinking and / or memory.			
<b>TOTAL AD8 SCORE</b>			