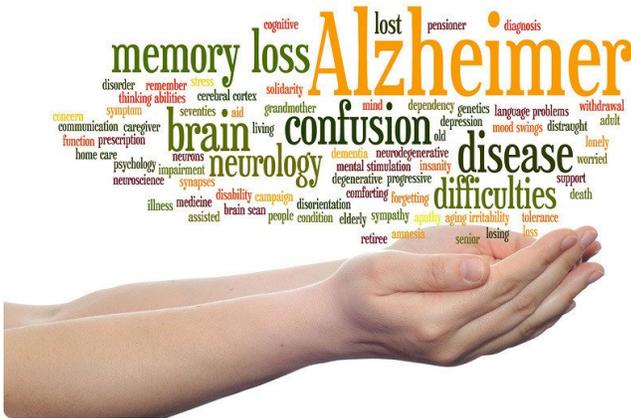


Awareness on Alzheimer's

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There is no prevention for the disease but if the precautions are taken, the onslaught can be postponed.



Most people often think that this Alzheimer's is a normal part of ageing. Though this may not be true, a greatest risk factor for Alzheimer's disease is increasing age. This is evident by majority of Alzheimer's patients being 65 years or older. This doesn't completely classify the disease as an elderly disease. This is because there are many people under 65 who are suffering from disease.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia. It destroys brain cells and nerves disrupting the transmitters which carry messages in the brain, particularly those responsible for storing memories.

During the course of Alzheimer's disease, nerve cells die in particular regions of the brain. The brain shrinks as gaps develop in the temporal lobe and hippocampus, which are responsible for storing and retrieving new information. This further affects people's ability to remember, speak, think and make decisions. The production of certain chemicals in the brain, such as acetylcholine is also affected. The cause for the death of nerve cell is not identified but there are characteristic appearances of the brain after death. In particular, 'tangles' and 'plaques' made from protein fragments are observed under the microscope in damaged areas of brain. This confirms the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease.

Characteristically, the beginning of Alzheimer's disease is lapses of memory, struggle in finding the right words for everyday objects or mood swings. As Alzheimer's progresses, the person may:

- Routinely forget recent events, names and faces and have difficulty in understanding what is being said.
- Experience personality changes, appearing to no longer care about those around them.
- May have mood swings and burst into tears for no seeming reason, or believe that someone is trying to harm them.

In advanced cases people may also:

- Adopt unsettling behaviour like getting up in the middle of the night or wander off and become lost.
- Lose their inhibitions and sense of suitable behaviour, undress in public or make inappropriate sexual advances.

Early symptoms

Every person is unique in one way or another. In the same way Dementia affects people differently - no two people will have symptoms that develop in exactly the same way as the other. An individual's personality, general health and social situation are all important factors in determining the impact of dementia on him or her.

The most common early symptoms of Dementia are as follows:

- Loss of memory
- Trouble in doing day today errands
- Difficulties with linguistic
- Confusion of time and place
- Poor or decreased judgment
- Difficulty in the sequences of day to activities
- Keeping things and forgetting where they are kept
- Changes in mood or behaviour
- Changes in character

A person with dementia may seem different from his or her usual self in ways that are difficult to pinpoint. A person may become suspicious, irritable, depressed, apathetic or anxious and agitated especially in situations where memory problems are causing difficulties.

There is no prevention for the disease but if the precautions are taken and if a person adheres to the healthy lifestyle and stop smoking, consuming alcohol and keep Blood Pressure and Sugar under control the onslaught can be postponed.

The important factor in the disease is that the patient's family members have to be educated to take care of the patient which will decrease the suffering to certain extent and the life can become bearable for the patient.

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