

What is Alzheimer's Disease? (early stage)

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a neurological condition in which the nerve cells in the brain die. The onset of AD is typically gradual, and the first signs of it may be attributed to old age or ordinary forgetfulness.

As the disease advances, cognitive abilities, including the ability to make decisions and perform everyday tasks, are eroded, and personality changes and difficult behaviors may emerge. In its later stages, AD leads to dementia and eventually death.

Early Stage Alzheimer's Disease

- Trouble remembering recent events and conversations
- Difficulty remembering the month or day of the week
- Loss of ability to manage finances
- Withdrawal from social situations and general apathy
- Cooking and shopping become more difficult
- Poor judgment – difficulty making wise decisions
- Tendency to lose things
- May become disoriented in familiar surroundings

Caregiving In the Early Stage

During the early stage of AD, both the caregiver and the care recipient can adjust to the diagnosis and make plans for the future:

- Learning:** The more you know about AD, the easier it will be for you as a caregiver.
- Emotional Support:** A diagnosis of AD can be a heart-wrenching experience for both the person diagnosed and the caregiver. Getting appropriate emotional support through counseling, a support group or other family members is extremely important.
- Family Roles:** As the disease progresses, it will be harder for the person with AD to fulfill the roles they have typically played in the family. For example, if he or she was the only driver in the family, it will be important for family members to find alternative means of transportation (e.g., learning how to drive, hiring in-home care, using public transportation, etc.)
- Finances:** AD can be an extremely costly disease. The life span of someone with Alzheimer's can range from two to more than 20 years. It is important to begin mapping out strategies for meeting the increasing financial demands placed on the family as the disease progresses. Financial planning should include reviewing your insurance coverage (e.g., health, disability, long-term care, etc.). Be aware that Medicare does not cover long-term care or custodial care.
- Legal:** Eventually the person with AD will need help paying the bills, getting medical care, and making decisions. Two legal documents, Power of Attorney for Finances and Power of Attorney for Healthcare, can ensure that the person with AD is cared for by trusted family members or friends.

For more information call:
708-786-8600

