

# What is Alzheimer's Disease? (late 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.

## Late Stage Alzheimer's Disease

- Inability to communicate
- Inability to recognize people, places and objects
- Cannot participate in any personal care activities
- Loses ability to walk
- Loses ability to smile
- Muscles may become contracted
- May lose ability to swallow
- Seizures may occur
- Weight loss
- Majority of time spent sleeping
- May exhibit a need to suck on items
- Incontinence

## Caregiving In the Late Stage

As the symptoms of AD increase, the demands placed on the caregiver increase. Care becomes more physically demanding and more time-consuming. At some point, most caregivers require outside help.

- Emotional Support:** People caring for loved ones with AD frequently feel isolated, and it is common for caregivers to suffer from grief and loss as the person they are caring for changes.
- Hospice:** Hospice services are designed to support individuals at the end of life. Services may include support groups, visiting nurses, pain management and home care. Hospice services are usually arranged through the treating physician, and are usually not available until the physician anticipates that a person has less than six months to live. Several organizations specialize in helping families deal with the challenges involved in end-of-life care.
- Placement:** Families caring for a loved one with end-stage Alzheimer's should give thoughtful consideration to placement in a skilled nursing facility, where adequate management and supervision can be provided.

For more information call:  
708-786-8600

