

# Alzheimer's and Dementia 101

## What is dementia?

Dementia is the loss of cognitive functioning – thinking, remembering and reasoning – and behavioral abilities to such an extent that it interferes with a person's daily life and activities. The causes of dementia can vary, depending on the types of brain changes that may be taking place.

## What is Alzheimer's disease?

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive brain disorder that slowly destroys memory and thinking skills and, eventually, the ability to carry out the simplest tasks. Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia among older adults.

## What is Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)?

Some people with memory problems have a condition called mild cognitive impairment (MCI). In MCI, people have more memory problems than normal for their age, but their symptoms do not interfere with their everyday lives. Older people with MCI are at greater risk for developing Alzheimer's, but not all of them do.

## Who is at risk?

Scientists do not fully understand what causes Alzheimer's disease. The causes probably include a combination of genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors. However, African-Americans and Hispanics are at a greater risk of developing the disease.

## Warning Signs

If someone has several of these symptoms, it does not mean they definitely have the disease. It does mean that a specialist trained in evaluating memory disorders should examine them – Early Diagnosis is Key.

1. Repeatedly asking the same question.
2. Forgetting familiar activities that were previously done with ease.
3. Repeating the same story.
4. Getting lost in familiar surroundings.
5. Losing one's ability to pay bills or balance a checkbook.
6. Neglecting to bathe, while insisting that they have.

## RISK FACTORS FOR ALZHEIMER'S



**AGE (65 YEARS AND UP)**



**HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE**



**HIGH CHOLESTEROL**



**FAMILY HISTORY OF MEMORY PROBLEMS**



**HEART DISEASE**



**DIABETES**



**BEING FEMALE**



**OBESITY**



**INACTIVITY**



**Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

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