

Alzheimer's San Diego

Stages of Alzheimer's Disease



What are the first signs of Alzheimer's disease?

The first symptoms of Alzheimer's vary from person to person. Memory problems are typically one of the first signs of cognitive impairment related to Alzheimer's disease.

The decline in non-memory aspects of cognition, such as word-finding, vision/spatial issues, and impaired reasoning or judgment, may also signal the very early stages of Alzheimer's.

Alzheimer's disease progresses in several stages: mild (or early stage), moderate (or middle stage), and severe (or late stage).

1 Early Stage

In this stage, a person may be physically healthy and able to maintain their independence. However, over time the person, their family members, or friends may begin to notice changes in their memory, cognition, behavior, and personality.

Seeking support from a physician can help a person rule out treatable causes of memory loss, or perhaps provide a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease.



Some early symptoms include:

- Memory loss that interferes with daily activities
- Poor judgment or impaired reasoning
- Difficulty learning new things
- Increased anxiety and/or aggression
- Repeating questions
- Mood and personality changes
- Taking longer to complete daily tasks
- Problems with handling money and paying bills
- Trouble with language, reading and writing
- Loss of spontaneity and sense of initiative
- Wandering and getting lost in familiar places
- Losing or misplacing objects or putting items in odd places

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2 Middle Stage

In this stage, supervision becomes necessary, which can be a difficult transition for all involved. The person with dementia will begin to require more assistance with Activities of Daily Living (bathing, toileting, feeding, dressing and transferring). In addition, the person may experience:

- Increased memory loss and confusion
- Difficulty organizing thoughts
- Shortened attention span
- Problems adapting to new environments
- Difficulty with sequencing or completing multi-step tasks (for example, following a story line or in-depth conversation)
- May or may not be able to recognize family and friends
- Changes in behavior including, hallucinations, delusions, restlessness, sundowning and paranoia
- Inability to regulate or filter emotions or responses

3 Late Stage

In this stage, people have difficulty with verbal communication and become fully dependent on others for their care. Towards the end of the disease, the person may be in bed most of the time as the body begins to slow down and prepare for departure. Some common symptoms that can be expected include:

- Challenges with communication
- Weight loss
- Skin infections
- Inability to move from a sit-to-stand position without assistance
- Difficulty swallowing
- Using nonverbal cues to express distress, discomfort or pain
- Increased sleeping
- Loss of bowel and bladder control