

# Causes of Alzheimer's disease

## Alzheimer's disease causes and risk factors

Experts haven't determined a single cause of Alzheimer's disease, but they have identified certain risk factors, including:

- Age. Most people who develop Alzheimer's disease are 65 years of age or older.
- Family history. If you have an immediate family member who has developed the condition, you're more likely to get it.
- Genetics. Certain genes have been linked to Alzheimer's disease.



Having one or more of these risk factors doesn't mean that you'll develop Alzheimer's disease. It simply raises your risk level.

Other possible risk factors include a history of:

- depression
- smoking
- cardiovascular disease
- previous traumatic brain injury

To learn more about your personal risk of developing Alzheimer's, talk with your doctor.

## Alzheimer's and genetics

While there's no one identifiable cause of Alzheimer's, genetics may play a key role. One gene in particular is of interest to researchers. Apolipoprotein E (APOE) is a gene that's been linked to the onset of Alzheimer's symptoms in older adults.

Blood tests can determine if you have a particular version of this gene, which increases your risk of developing Alzheimer's. Keep in mind that even if someone has this gene, they may not get Alzheimer's.

The opposite is also true: Someone may still get Alzheimer's even if they don't have the gene. There's no way to tell for sure whether someone will develop Alzheimer's. Other genes could also increase the risk of Alzheimer's. Several rare genes are linked to certain younger onset cases of the condition.

## **Alzheimer's stages**

Alzheimer's is a progressive disease, which means the symptoms will gradually increase over time. There are seven main stages:

### **Stages 1–3: Pre-dementia and mild cognitive impairment**

Stage 1. There are no symptoms at this stage. If you have a family history of Alzheimer's and no symptoms, you may wish to talk to a doctor about strategies for healthy aging.

Stage 2. The earliest symptoms appear, such as forgetfulness.

Stage 3. Mild physical and cognitive impairments appear, such as reduced memory and concentration. Learning new skills may become harder. These changes may only be noticeable by someone very close to the person.

### **Stages 4–7: Dementia**

Stage 4. Alzheimer's is often diagnosed at this stage, but it's still considered mild. It's common to notice memory loss and to have difficulty managing everyday tasks.

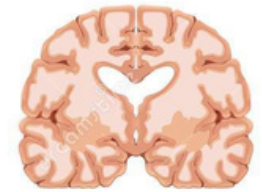
Stage 5. Moderate to severe symptoms will require help from loved ones or caregivers. This is necessary to ensure that daily needs are being met, such as eating meals and managing the home.

Stage 6. At this stage, a person with Alzheimer's will need help with basic tasks, such as eating, dressing, and toileting.

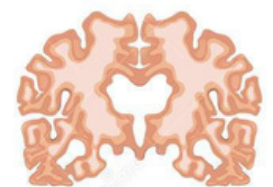
Stage 7. This is the most severe and final stage of Alzheimer's. There is usually a progressive loss of speech and facial expressions. Movement is likely to become limited.

As a person progresses through these stages, they'll need increasing support from their caregivers. Talk with your doctor about strategies to help you manage these changes. Appropriate care can help you maintain comfort and quality of life for as long as possible. It's also important to discuss your care plan with your loved ones.

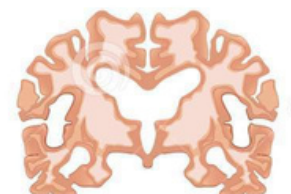
People with Alzheimer's will need more assistance with medical decisions as the disease progresses. People with Alzheimer's typically live for 4 to 8 years after diagnosis, though some live for up to 20 years.



Healthy Brain



Mild Alzheimer's Disease



Severe Alzheimer's Disease

## **Younger onset Alzheimer's**

Alzheimer's typically affects people ages 65 and older. However, it can occur in people as early as in their 30s, 40s, or 50s. This is called younger onset, or early onset Alzheimer's. This type of Alzheimer's affects fewer than 10 percent of all people with the condition.

Because doctors aren't always looking for signs of Alzheimer's in younger adults, getting a diagnosis can take a long time. Symptoms of early onset Alzheimer's depend on the stage of the disease. Early signs can include mild memory loss and trouble concentrating or finishing everyday tasks. It can be hard to find the right words, and you may lose track of time.

Some studies have found that certain vision and eye changes could indicate early stage Alzheimer's disease for people in their 50s and older.

People with a family history of younger onset Alzheimer's are at greater risk of developing this condition. There are several rare genes that, together, cause groups of cases in some families. People with a family history of Alzheimer's should talk with their doctor.

## **Preventing Alzheimer's**

Just as there's no known cure for Alzheimer's, there are no foolproof preventive measures. For now, health-promoting lifestyle habits are the best tools we have to prevent cognitive decline.

The following steps may help:

- Try to quit smoking. If you smoke, quitting benefits your health both immediately and in the long term.
- Exercise regularly. Getting active reduces the risk of many conditions, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
- Keep your brain active. Try some cognitive training exercises.
- Eat well. Eat a balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Maintain an active social life.
- Friendships, volunteering, and hobbies are likely to benefit your overall health.

Be sure to talk with your doctor before making any big changes in your lifestyle.

## **Alzheimer's care**

As Alzheimer's progresses, the tasks of daily living require more support. If you have a loved one with Alzheimer's, it's important to start learning about what to expect and what your role may be in your loved one's future care.

Caregiving is a role that's typically not easy, but it can also be very rewarding. If your loved one has Alzheimer's, here are some ways to plan and prepare for caregiving:

- Educate yourself about Alzheimer's, its stages, and its typical symptoms. By reading this article, you're already on the right track.
- Connect with family members who can step in to help.
- Consider joining a support group for dementia caregivers.
- Look up professional home care, respite care, and adult day care programs in your area.
- Remember that you'll need support too. Reach out to the people you're close to, and be open to accepting help.
- As a caregiver, it's important to take care of yourself as well as your loved one. Caregiving has its difficult moments, and the strain of ongoing responsibilities can start to negatively affect your health. As much as possible, a robust care plan should include support for you, too.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/alzheimers-disease#takeaway>

**More materials on <https://www.enso-academy.com/forum>**

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