

live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home, and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at Jerry Gregory & Associates .

Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease is often difficult to distinguish because the early signs of it closely resemble the natural signs of aging.

What is Alzheimer's Disease?

Alzheimer's is a brain disorder that gradually destroys the ability to remember, reason, imagine, and learn. As the symptoms grow in severity, patients will no longer be able to recognize themselves or the people around them. Simple tasks such as bathing and dressing become impossible.

Alzheimer's disease is difficult to differentiate from other forms of dementia. Only performing an autopsy can lead to a definitive diagnosis. Alzheimer's is distinguishable by abnormal clumps (called senile plaques) and irregular knots (called neurofibrillary tangles) of brain cells. For reasons not well understood, these plaques and tangles take over healthy brain tissues, devastating the area of the brain associated with intellectual function.

Persons afflicted with Alzheimer's disease typically are otherwise in good physical condition. Death from the disease is rare, and rather is generally brought on by a secondary condition not related to Alzheimer's.

Risk Factors

Just like any other disease, there are certain traits or behaviors that make some people more likely than others to get Alzheimer's disease. Some risk factors for Alzheimer's disease are:

- Increasing age;
- Down syndrome; and
- Family history and genetics.

Symptoms

In its early stages, forgetfulness and mild personality changes mark Alzheimer's. As the disease progresses, the afflicted person has greater difficulty doing things that require planning, decision-making, and judgment. She will eventually be unable to complete the tasks of daily living, such as bathing and eating. In the last stages of the disease, she will become bedridden and unable to recognize close family members or even herself.

The Future Looks Bright

For the first time, researchers are extremely optimistic that in the near future new treatments will be able to delay the onset of

Alzheimer's. The ultimate goal is to make Alzheimer's disease a manageable chronic illness like diabetes or asthma.

Alzheimer's Association

Alzheimer's disease is devastating, not only for the patient but also for his or her loved ones. It can be especially difficult for the primary caretaker, so it is important to have a network of family and friends to lend a hand. Contact the Alzheimer's Association for information on support groups, physicians, resources, and referrals.

www.alz.org
1-800-272-3900



Did you know...

According to the Alzheimer's Association, there are currently four million people living with the disease. And, as Baby Boomers age, this number is expected to jump to fourteen million people nationwide. While there is no cure for this debilitating disease, new treatments have been found that help lessen Alzheimer's symptoms and slow its progression.