



## What is Alzheimer's Disease? Recognizing the Symptoms of Dementia & Alzheimer's Disease

### What is Dementia?

"Dementia" is a general term that describes a decline in mental abilities caused by physical changes in the brain that impact a person's daily life. There are several types of dementia, including: Dementia with Lewy Bodies (DLB), Parkinson's disease dementia, and vascular dementia. Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia, making up 60-80% of diagnosed cases. Learn more about [dementia](http://Alz.org) at [Alz.org](http://Alz.org).

### What is Alzheimer's Disease?

In Alzheimer's disease, the first region of the brain affected is the hippocampus – this area is responsible for learning and memory. Memory loss is often the first symptom of brain cell damage due to the buildup of proteins called beta-amyloid (plaques) and twisted strands of tau (tangles).

Alzheimer's is a progressive, degenerative disease that worsens over time. People can live for four to 20 years after diagnosis. There is no cure but treatments exist that may temporarily slow symptoms and improve quality of life.

A few common symptoms of Alzheimer's include:

- Memory loss
- Vision problems
- Problems with words
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks
- Changes in mood
- Withdrawing
- Difficulty solving problems or planning

There is currently no way to prevent Alzheimer's disease, but there is growing evidence suggesting that lifestyle strategies for healthy aging can reduce cognitive decline and improve brain health. Some of these strategies include maintaining a healthy weight; managing and reducing stress; exercising both body and mind; avoiding tobacco and excess alcohol; and staying socially connected. A holistic approach encompassing all these strategies is most promising.

Created in partnership with the [Alzheimer's Association](http://Alzheimer's Association) and [Dementia Friendly America](http://Dementia Friendly America).  
For more information, visit [www.pbs.org/EveryMinuteCounts](http://www.pbs.org/EveryMinuteCounts).

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