

# What You Need To Know About Alzheimer's And Dementia

*The next read is an excerpt from "The Doctor's Book of Survival Home Remedies", Chapter: Alzheimer's and Dementia, pages 21-23:*

*"When you lose your memory, you lose everything. You lose everyone who ever mattered to you."*

*Neal Barnard, MD*

I'd like to clear up a common misunderstanding at the outset of this section. Alzheimer's is a *type* of dementia. Many people think they are two separate diseases-they are not. So when I refer to Alzheimer's and dementia in the singular, this explains why.

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Invasions take place in the brains of people suffering from Alzheimer's and dementia. Maybe you've watched that scene in the '79 sci-fi horror film *Alien*, where the alien bursts out of Sigourney Weaver's stomach. The hostile aliens multiply.

The brain invaders are a type of protein called beta-amyloid. They are unusual, blob-like structures and have no right to be there. They ooze out of the cells, and lodge between the cells.

These amyloid invaders are the hallmark of Alzheimer's and dementia. They destroy synapses, the messengers that carry information from cell to cell. The eventual outcome in people

with Alzheimer's and dementia is total memory loss.

A 2018 study at King's College London shows, for the first time ever, a critical link between synapse loss and beta-amyloid in the first stages of the disease. The researchers also found two pieces to the Alzheimer's-dementia puzzle:

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## Symptoms

Signs and symptoms can be as innocuous as turning the wrong way onto a one-way street. Trying to unlock a stranger's car in a parking lot, refusing to listen to others who say it's not your car. These were both signs Neil's family observed about two years before he was finally diagnosed with dementia.

Here are a handful of signs commonly associated with AD/dementia.

### Confusion with time and/or place



Forgetting the time, date, or weekday, or even season is common. Forgetting where you are going or where you have been.

### Images and Spatial Relationships

Declining vision is another common problem. Changes in the

brain may also cause difficulty in reading and judging distance and depth of field. Also affected is the brain's ability to determine color and contrast.

## **Making Plans**

Making any kind of plan becomes a challenge. It could be as simple as making arrangements to meet a friend for coffee. Or as complex as devising a plan to declutter a room or build a sundeck.

## **Memory Loss**

Short-term memory loss that eventually interferes with daily life is the hallmark sign of this disease. Sure, memory naturally declines as we age. But dementia-related memory loss is a bit different. Asking for the same information over and over is not symptomatic of typical age-related memory loss. There is a difference between Alzheimer's and dementia memory loss. Dementia generally affects short term memory, whereas Alzheimer's affects both short- and long-term memory. The latter happens in the late stages of the disease.

## **Erratic Mood and Personality Changes**

Irrational outbursts, irritable without apparent reason, and otherwise different behavior. It's common to become uncharacteristically fearful, suspicious, or anxious.

## **Reading and Numbers**

It becomes increasingly more difficult to read words and numbers.

## **Sleep**

Changes in sleep patterns are common. This includes difficulty falling and/or

staying asleep.

## **Solving Problems**



This includes keeping track of information. For example, someone gives you their phone number and you forget where you put it. Whereas in the past you would have immediately entered it into your cell phone, you no longer think to do that. Tasks like gathering all your receipts, tax forms, and so on to do your annual taxes are challenging. Chances are high that these papers will be scattered here and there, and you won't know where to start looking for them. When you do find them, you may not have planned where to put them so they could end up scattered about again.

Math problems are also a huge challenge. Even simple calculations become perplexing.

## **Speaking and/or Writing**

Struggles with finding the right words are not uncommon. Not knowing how to join a conversation or getting into one and suddenly stopping, unsure what to say next. Handwriting becomes progressively less legible, the script is small and squiggly.

# Withdrawal

Opting out of family gatherings or social events with friends is a usual sign. Even a long-standing coffee date with a few friends in a coffee shop may be too much to handle for someone with dementia.

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