

Alzheimer *Society*

Alzheimer's disease

# 10 warning signs



Dementia is a term used to describe a set of symptoms or behaviours that may include memory loss, difficulty with problem-solving and changes in mood and behaviour. Dementia is identified when these symptoms are severe enough to interfere with a person's daily life and activities. Alzheimer's disease is one type of dementia in which a progressive deterioration of brain cell function causes symptoms that affect one's daily life. However, since these symptoms may also be due to other conditions such as depression, drug interactions or an infection, it is important to see a doctor in order to get the correct diagnosis and proper treatment. If dementia is suspected, your local Alzheimer Society can connect you to information, support and education.

To help you understand what Alzheimer's disease might look like, the Alzheimer Society has developed the following list of warning signs:



# 10 warning signs

## Sign 1 Memory loss that affects day-to-day abilities

It is normal to occasionally forget appointments, colleagues' names or a friend's phone number only to remember them a short while later. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may forget things more often or may have difficulty recalling information that has recently been learned.

## Sign 2 Difficulty performing familiar tasks

Busy people can be so distracted from time to time that they may forget to serve part of a meal, only to remember about it later. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may have trouble completing tasks that have been familiar to them all their lives, such as preparing a meal or playing a game.

## Sign 3 Problems with language

Anyone can have trouble finding the right word to express what they want to say. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may forget simple words or may substitute words such that what they are saying is difficult to understand.

## Sign 4 Disorientation in time and space

It is common to forget the day of the week or one's destination - for a moment. But people with Alzheimer's disease can become lost on their own street, not knowing how they got there or how to get home.

## Sign 5 Impaired judgment

From time to time, people may make questionable decisions such as putting off seeing a doctor when they are not feeling well. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may experience changes in judgment or decision-making, such as not recognizing a medical problem that needs attention or wearing heavy clothing on a hot day.

## Sign 6 Problems with abstract thinking

From time to time, people may have difficulty with tasks that require abstract thinking, such as balancing a chequebook. However, someone with Alzheimer's disease may have significant difficulties with such tasks because of a loss of understanding what numbers are and how they are used.

## Sign 7 Misplacing things

Anyone can temporarily misplace a wallet or keys. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in inappropriate places: for example, an iron in the freezer or a wristwatch in the sugar bowl.

## Sign 8 Changes in mood and behaviour

Anyone can feel sad or moody from time to time. However, someone with Alzheimer's disease can show varied mood swings - from calmness to tears to anger - for no apparent reason.

## Sign 9 Changes in personality

Personalities can change in subtle ways over time. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may experience more striking personality changes and can become confused, suspicious or withdrawn. Changes may also include lack of interest, fearfulness or acting out of character.

## Sign 10 Loss of initiative

It is normal to tire of housework, business activities or social obligations, but most people regain their initiative. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease may become passive and disinterested, and require cues and prompting to become involved.



The Alzheimer Society is the leading nationwide health charity for people living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Active in communities across Canada, the Society:

- Offers information, support and education programs for people with dementia, their families and caregivers
- Funds research to find a cure and improve the care of people with dementia
- Promotes public education and awareness of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias to ensure people know where to turn for help
- Influences policy and decision-making to address the needs of people with dementia and their caregivers.

For more information, contact your local Alzheimer Society or visit our website at [www.alzheimer.ca](http://www.alzheimer.ca).

**Help for Today. Hope for Tomorrow...<sup>®</sup>**

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