



# Facts on Aging

## Living with Dementia

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***Aging brings many changes with it, affecting both body and mind. To many, the thought of becoming mentally incompetent is more frightening than the thought of physical disease. While up to 10% of the population aged 65 and older suffer from some form of dementia, cognitive decline is not an inevitable consequence of advanced age.***

### *Impacts of Dementia*

- Of those who suffer from dementia, most have Alzheimer's disease (AD), which affects an estimated 4 million people in the United States. Epidemiologic projections estimate that by 2040 approximately 14 million Americans will suffer from AD.

*Source: Geriatrics Review Syllabus, Gary W. Small, MD (2004)*

- Multi-infarct dementia – the most common form of vascular dementia – is caused by a series of strokes that disrupt blood flow and damage or destroy brain tissue. It accounts for 10–20% of all cases of progressive dementia. It usually affects people between the ages of 60-75, and is more likely to occur in men than women.

*Source: NIA. Multi-Infarct Dementia Fact Sheet*

- Large-scale population studies show that diabetes is associated with several types of dementia, including AD and vascular dementia.
- Dementia has a major impact on society. The total costs approach \$100 billion annually if the costs of medical and long-term care, home care, and lost productivity for caregivers are included. Much of the direct cost is paid by Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance, but families caring for patients with dementia must bear the greatest burden of expense.

*Source: Geriatrics Review Syllabus, Gary W. Small, MD (2004)*

### *10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease*

- Memory loss
- Misplacing things
- Personality change
- Mood/behavior changes
- Loss of initiative

- Problems with familiar tasks
- Problems with language
- Disorientation to time and place
- Poor or decreased judgment
- Problems with abstract thinking

*Source: Florida Department of Elder Affairs Consumer Resource Guide (2005)*

### *Facts about Alzheimer's Disease*

- Alzheimer's disease affects as many as 4 million Americans. Most people diagnosed with AD are older than 65. However, it is possible for the disease to occur in people in their 40's and 50's. Recent research has shown links between some genes and AD, but in about 90% of cases, there is no clear genetic link.

*Source: AoA, Fact Sheet on Alzheimer's Disease (2006)*

- On average, AD patients live 8–10 years after they are diagnosed, though the disease can last for as many as 20 years.

*Source: NIA, Alzheimer's Disease Information & Referral Center (2006)*

- Alzheimer's is the No.1 cause of institutionalization in the U.S.
- For the age group 65 years and older, the prevalence of AD approximates 6–8%. The disease prevalence doubles every 5 years after age 60 years; by age 85 years and older, an estimated 30% or more of the population has AD.

*Source: Geriatrics Review Syllabus, Gary W. Small, MD (2004)*

- Physicians are now able to accurately diagnose 80–90% of people who show symptoms of AD. A definitive diagnosis is possible, however, only through the examination of brain tissue at autopsy.

*Source: AoA, Fact Sheet on Alzheimer's Disease (2006)*

- Scientists do not yet fully understand what causes AD. There probably is not one single cause, but several factors that affect each person differently. Age and family history are the most important known risk factors. Scientists believe that genetics may play a role in some AD cases. For example, early-onset familial AD, a rare form of AD that usually occurs between the ages of 30 and 60, is inherited. The more common form of AD is known as late-onset. It occurs later in life, and no obvious inheritance pattern is seen in most families.

Source: NIA, Alzheimer's Disease Information & Referral Center (2006)

## Preventing & Treating Alzheimer's Disease

- Regular exercise, social interaction, and a healthy diet are crucial. But so is doing familiar things in unfamiliar ways. Disrupting routines can stimulate nerve cells, enhance blood flow, and increase the production of chemicals called neurotrophins that protect those precious brain cells.
- So far, four prescription drugs have been approved by the FDA for people with mild-to-moderate AD: Cognex (tacrine), Aricept (donepezil), Exelon (rivastigmine), and Reminyl (galantamine). They all work by the same mechanism: the drugs increase

Source: AARP Magazine. Stay Sharp Longer (2005)

**Many studies have shown that people with limited or no formal education before the age of 10 are at a higher risk of Alzheimer's later in life. It may be that intensive learning when the brain is young and plastic greatly increases the number of synapses. The brain can call on these reserves as it ages, or in case of injury, such as a stroke.**

Source: BusinessWeek article "I can't Remember", Sept. 2003

the level of acetylcholine in the brain – a chemical that nerves use to communicate with each other – by inhibiting an enzyme called cholinesterase that breaks down the acetylcholine. While these inhibitors have an effect on the symptoms, there is no evidence that they have any effect on the underlying progression of the disease

Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2004

- Memantine (U.S. brand name = Namenda) is the first drug to be approved by the FDA for treatment of moderate to severe Alzheimer's disease. It works by regulating the activity of glutamate, a messenger chemical involved in learning and memory. Its most common side effect is dizziness.

Source: Mayo Clinic

- "If you could delay the onset of symptoms by five years, the total number of new cases projected into the future would be cut in half."

Source: Steven Ferris, Ph.D., director of the Alzheimer's Disease Center at the New York University School of Medicine.

- Scientists have discovered genetic mutations that cause a form of familial frontotemporal dementia, a finding that provides clues to the underlying mechanism of this devastating disease and that may provide insight for future approaches to developing therapies.

Source: National Institute on Aging (2006)



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