

Life Letter *mature*

Recognize the signs of Alzheimer's - Part 1

As we age, it's normal for our memory to change. However, Alzheimer's Disease warning signs are more than simple lapses in memory. According to the Alzheimer's Association, victims experience difficulties learning, communicating, reasoning and thinking. These changes can be severe enough to impact an individual's family life, work and social activities.

The following checklist can help you recognize the difference between possible Alzheimer's Disease warning signs and normal age-related memory changes:

1. Memory Loss - Occasionally forgetting names or appointments can be normal. One of the most common early signs of dementia is forgetting recently learned information. The person begins to forget more often and cannot recall the information later.

2. Difficulty performing familiar tasks - It's normal to occasionally forget why you came into a room or what you were going to say. Dementia victims often find it hard to plan or complete everyday tasks. They may lose track of the steps involved in placing a phone call, preparing a meal or playing a favorite game.

3. Problems with language - Sometimes having trouble finding the right word is normal. Alzheimer's sufferers often forget simple words or substitute unusual words, making speech or writing hard to understand.

For example, they may ask for "that thing for my mouth" instead of toothbrush.

4. Time and place disorientation - Sometimes forgetting the day of the week or where you were going is normal. Alzheimer's victims can become lost in their own neighborhood, forget where they are, how they got there, or how to get back home.

5. Poor or decreased judgment - Making a questionable or debatable decision from time to time is normal. Someone with Alzheimer's may dress inappropriately, such as wearing several layers on a warm day or little clothing on a cold one. They may also show poor judgment, like giving away large sums of money to a telemarketer.

6. Problems with abstract thinking - Finding it difficult to balance a checkbook is normal. An Alzheimer's victim may have unusual difficulty performing complex mental tasks, like forgetting what numbers are for and how they should be used.

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