

Alzheimer's disease

Alzheimer's disease is the most common memory disease. There are different types of Alzheimer's disease that are known. Among the risk factors are aging, high blood-pressure, high cholesterol level, overweight, lack of exercise, substance abuse and depression.

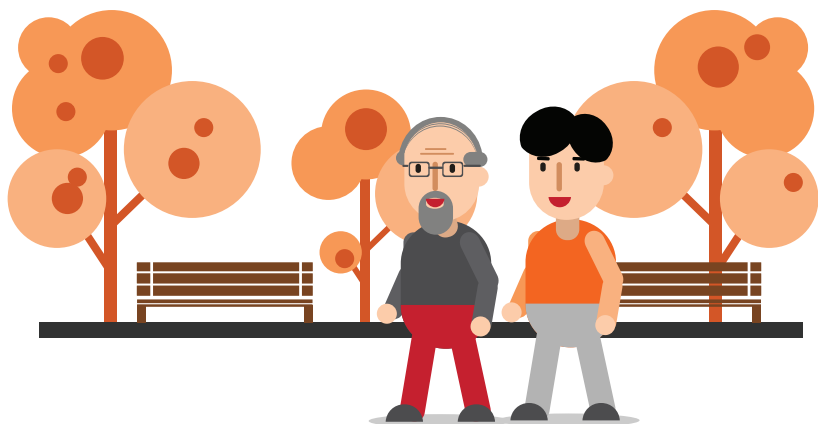


The risk for Alzheimer's increases as a person grows older, but the disease can also happen to people of working age. Typically, the disease shows as difficulties when learning new things and problems with short-term memory. Difficulties in perception, speech and following instructions can also appear.

The brain's volume and total weight decrease, the volume of brain ventricles increases, and the hippocampus deteriorates. The brain accumulates beta-amyloid plaque, brain cells disappear and other tissue changes happen. Disease is inherited in only 1-2% of clinical cases.

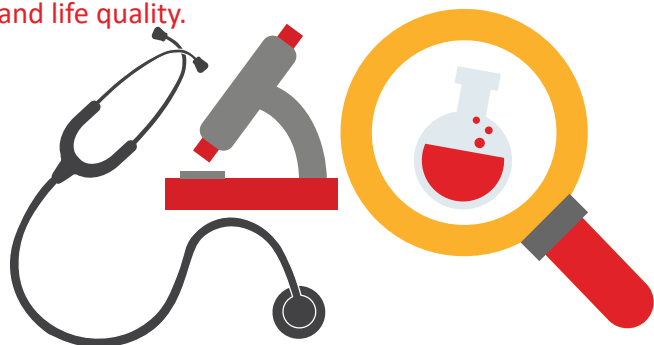
Treating of Alzheimer's disease

Memory disease symptoms should always be checked when there are concerning changes in memory or in functional abilities. The symptoms of the disease is unique to each person. There is no cure for Alzheimer's disease, but functional abilities can be maintained by medication and active lifestyle.



The goal of the treatment is to support the patient in different phases of the memory disease. Medications and rehabilitation aim to slow down the progress of the disease and maintain performance and life quality.

Seek health examinations from health centers or occupational health care. After the diagnosis, regular check-up is important.



Doctor examines and makes necessary referrals for future examination. Memory examination include blood tests, memory tests and brain imaging. Closest family are heard too.

It is important to always keep the patient plan updated, where medication treatment plans and life history is recorded. A living-will and continuing power-of-attorney is good to be done in the early stage of the disease.



Memory disease symptoms appears to be frightening, as if it “creeps” into everyday life. The changes in brain start even at 20-30 years before the actual of symptoms.

TIMELINE

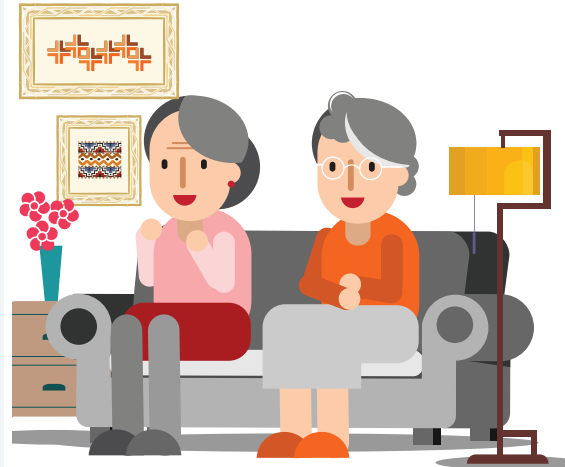
Early stage

- Daily activities or work becomes difficult
- Increase in uncertainty and hiding thoughts
- Symptoms may appear as exhaustion, stress, sleeping difficulty, irritability, depression and anxiety.



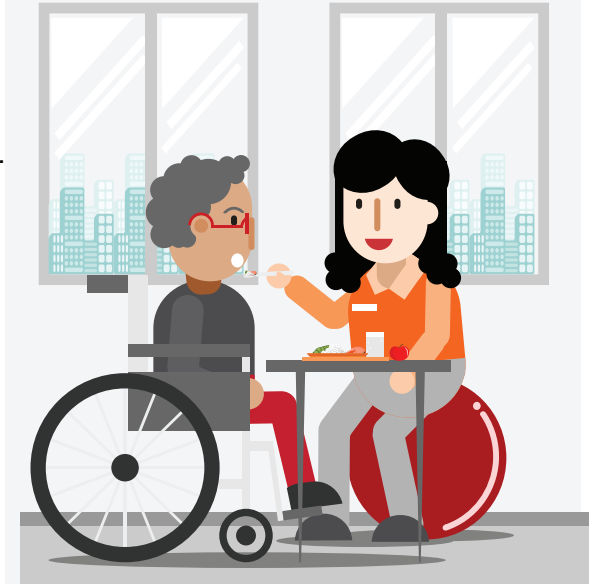
Mild decline stage

- The early stage symptoms worsen
- Decision making and financial management gets more difficult
- Difficulty in finding words
- Following conversations become harder, reading comprehension weakens
- Symptoms may appear as delusions or blaming
- Losing navigational skills or getting lost



Moderate decline stage

- Surviving alone becomes difficult, need for help and assistance increases.
- Weakened health condition.
- Difficulty in taking care of proper diet, which can lead to weight loss.
- Longing-for-home restlessness
- Symptoms may appear as delusion, irritability, and changes in behavior.



Severe decline stage

- There's a clear need for assistance.
- Overall health condition weakens
- Poor speech ability or it disappears completely
- Mobility can weaken
- The person can't recognize relatives
- Increased restlessness, if the person is not able to understand what is happening in the surrounding.

Sources:

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www.kaypahoito.fi

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