7 EARLY SIGNS of Alzheimer's Disease

Knowing These Signs Can Help You to Protect and Care for Your Loved One



the GANZHORN SUITES
Specialized Memory Care

Family Centered. Physician Connected.

As we get older, we all become forgetful from time to time. It's a normal part of aging. The kind of forgetfulness caused by Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia is not. Symptoms of dementia often develop gradually, so it's not always easy to determine if it's simple forgetfulness or something more.

If you're concerned that a loved one may be showing early signs of Alzheimer's disease or another type of dementia, it's helpful to know what changes to look for, so you can get your loved one the right treatment and services at the right time.



1 » Memory

Everyone forgets things from time to time. However, if a loved one regularly forgets important details such as their birthdate, names of friends and family or where they live, this may indicate a more serious issue. While this type of forgetfulness can be caused by medications, anesthesia or even an acute illness like a urinary tract infection, if it lingers beyond a few days, it may indicate a significant memory disorder like Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia.



2 » Altered Judgment

People with Alzheimer's may make poor decisions or behave in risky or uncharacteristic ways. For instance, they may make unusual or extravagant purchases, forget to pay their bills on a regular basis or start giving money to strangers.



3 » Decreased Interest

Another sign of dementia is decreased interest in social activities and hobbies. If your loved one is usually extroverted and social but now seems introverted and uninterested, that may indicate serious physiological changes are happening. In addition, if they've lost interest in lifelong hobbies or lack the motivation to participate, talk with them and their doctor about what may be causing these changes.

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4 » Ability to Perform Routine Tasks

Your loved one may forget to complete or take longer to do routine daily tasks such as bathing, dressing, grooming or eating. For example, perhaps your loved one can't remember how to put toothpaste on a toothbrush without being shown or they forget to eat because their brain isn't triggering feelings of hunger.



5 » Communication Issues

A person with dementia may notice changes in their ability to communicate. We've all had the experience of being unable to think of the word we want, but someone with dementia may confuse the names of objects (call a cat a dog) or mix-up unrelated words (call a cat a cantaloupe). They may also be less inhibited about using inappropriate language or gestures. Some forms of dementia affect one's ability to speak at all.



6 » Concentration and Recall

Everybody misplaces things from time to time, but someone with dementia may leave items in unlikely or inappropriate places, like leaving the phone in the freezer or putting a bottle of shampoo next to the TV. This can be a sign that your loved one is unable to concentrate on completing a task or recall what they were trying to accomplish in the first place.



7 » Mood and Personality

Mood and personality changes are common hallmarks of dementia. One or more symptoms such as irritability, anxiety, aggression or depression may develop and appear intermittently. In the early stages of the disease, your loved one may be aware that their abilities are changing but not understand why, so they may get angry and lash out or become depressed and withdraw. In the later stages of the disease, mood and personality changes may become more persistent. The good news is that a variety of medications are available to ease or alleviate these symptoms.

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Next Steps

If you are concerned that a loved one is showing signs of Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia, remember that you're not alone! There are many resources available, but start with these steps to gain a better understanding of what is happening:

1 » Talk About It

Alzheimer's disease can be difficult to talk about, but it's the first step in understanding your loved one's needs, concerns and wishes. Your loved one may worry about losing their independence, and as a caregiver, you may worry about how to best care for them. Sharing your questions and concerns with each other and seeking medical advice is key to connecting to the right resources to support your loved one. Communication will take patience, but it is a vital first step.

2 » Consult a Doctor

A definitive diagnosis is essential to determine the best treatment options. A primary care physician, internist or neurologist can diagnose the type of dementia and help you develop a care plan. During the exam, the physician will ask questions about your loved one's current symptoms, behaviors and medical history. A variety of diagnostic and lab tests along with brain-imaging scans may also be ordered. Knowing what type of dementia your loved one has will help you understand what to expect in the days ahead.

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3 » Connect with the Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association works on a national and local level to provide care and support for all those affected by Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Services include a professionally staffed 24/7 helpline (1-800-272-3900) offering information and advice on research and treatment options, along with numerous support groups and educational sessions in communities nationwide. The Association also offers caregivers and families comprehensive online resources and information through their **Alzheimer's and Dementia Caregiver Center**. To access these resources and to connect with your local chapter, visit **www.alz.org**.



4 » Join a Support Group

A support group offers caregivers, family and friends of those diagnosed with dementia a safe place to talk about the disease and develop a mutual support system. Most groups meet weekly or monthly and provide an opportunity to discuss needs and concerns, share challenges and coping strategies and learn about local resources. In addition to groups offered through the Alzheimer's Association, The Ganzhorn Suites offers a monthly Memory Loss Empowerment Group. For more information, click **here**.

5 » Evaluate Support Services

Should you decide that your loved one needs support services, there are many options available. Familiarizing yourself with options before a crisis happens is the best way to make an informed decision. Home health services, adult day care, assisted living and specialized memory care centers are offered in many communities. Find out more about support services in your area by doing an internet search or asking for recommendations from friends and colleagues.

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Everyone wants their loved one to feel safe, secure and cared for, and these steps can be instrumental in helping you determine what's best for them.

At The Ganzhorn Suites, we specialize in providing a comforting, safe and secure home for those living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Our purpose is to provide you with the support you need and your loved one with exceptional personalized care at every stage of the disease.



Speak with Our Community Relations Director to Schedule a Personal Tour

SCHEDULE YOUR TOUR

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