

Warning Signs You Should Know

- Your wife always misplaces her keys. But last Tuesday she couldn't remember what they were for.
- Your grandfather likes to take daily strolls around the neighborhood. But four times in the past month he's gotten lost and couldn't find his way home without help from a neighbor.
- Your favorite uncle can't remember your name or the names of your husband or children.

The memory loss, confusion and disorientation described in these examples are symptoms of dementing illness. The most common dementing illness is Alzheimer's disease. Unfortunately, many people fail to recognize that these symptoms indicate something is wrong. They may mistakenly assume that such behavior is a normal part of the aging process; it isn't. Or, symptoms may develop gradually and go unnoticed for a long time. Sometimes people refuse to act even when they know something's wrong.

It's important to see a physician when you recognize these symptoms. Only a physician can properly diagnose the person's condition, and sometimes symptoms are reversible. Even if the diagnosis is Alzheimer's disease, prescription medications are available to treat the symptoms of Alzheimer's. Early diagnosis is strongly recommended.

Wisconsin Alzheimer's Association

Greater Wisconsin Chapter in Green Bay, **800. 360. 2110**

Southeastern Wisconsin Chapter in Milwaukee, **800. 922. 2413**

South Central Wisconsin Chapter in Madison, **800. 428. 9280**

©2002 Alzheimer's Association, All rights reserved.



Special thanks to Wisconsin Public Television, UW Hospitals and Clinics, Wisconsin Alzheimer's Association, South Central Library System.

IS IT FORGETFULNESS...OR IS IT ALZHEIMER'S?

THE FORGETTING

A PORTRAIT OF ALZHEIMER'S



WISCONSIN PUBLIC TELEVISION
8 P.M., WEDNESDAY JANUARY 21

Find the answers...

Alzheimer's Early Recognition Telephone System (ALERTS)

An automated telephone screening and
information system for early dementia.

1. 800. 289. 4974

Ten Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

To help you know what warning signs to look for, the Alzheimer's Association has developed a checklist of common symptoms (some of them also may apply to other dementing illnesses). Review the list and check the symptoms that concern you. If you notice several symptoms, the individual with the symptoms should see a physician for a complete examination.

1. Memory loss that affects job skills.

It's normal to occasionally forget assignments, colleagues' names or a business associate's telephone number and remember them later. Those with a dementia, such as Alzheimer's disease, may forget things more often, and not remember them later.

2. Difficulty performing familiar tasks.

Busy people can be so distracted from time to time that they may leave the carrots on the stove and only remember to serve them at the end of the meal. People with Alzheimer's disease could prepare a meal and not only forget to serve it, but also forget they made it.

3. Problems with language.

Everyone has trouble finding the right word sometimes, but a person with Alzheimer's disease may forget simple words or substitute inappropriate words, making his or her sentence incomprehensible.

4. Disorientation of time and place.

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

5. Poor or decreased judgment.

People can become so immersed in an activity that they temporarily forget the child they're watching. People with Alzheimer's disease could forget entirely the child under their care. They may also dress inappropriately, wearing several shirts or blouses.

6. Problems with abstract thinking.

Balancing a checkbook may be disconcerting when the task is more complicated than usual. Someone with Alzheimer's disease could forget completely what the numbers are and what needs to be done with them.

7. Misplacing things.

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

8. Changes in mood or behavior.

Everyone becomes sad or moody from time to time. Someone with Alzheimer's disease can exhibit rapid mood swings — from calm to tears to anger — for no apparent reason.

9. Changes in personality.

People's personalities ordinarily change somewhat with age. But a person with Alzheimer's disease can change drastically, becoming extremely confused, suspicious or fearful.

10. Loss of initiative.

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