




A HIGHER STANDARD OF HOME CARE



IS IT ALZHEIMER'S?

DEMENTIA

Symptoms

Respite care provides short-term, temporary relief from dementia is a general term for a decline in thinking skills or loss of brain function. People with dementia also experience changes in their personalities and behavioral problems, such as agitation, anxiety, delusions (believing in a reality that does not exist) and hallucinations (seeing things that do not exist). The Alzheimer's Association cites the following as common symptoms of dementia:

- › Loss of memory, judgment and reasoning
- › Changes in mood, behavior and communication abilities
- › Difficulties with speech and movement
- › Mental confusion
- › Inability to perform routine tasks

These symptoms may affect a person's ability to function at work, in social relationships or in day-to-day activities. Some treatable conditions, such as depression, drug interactions and thyroid problems, can cause dementia.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Symptoms

Alzheimer's Disease, the most common form of dementia, is a degenerative condition that involves progressive brain cell failure. Alzheimer's is often characterized by difficulty remembering, thinking and using language. In the early stages of Alzheimer's, an individual may experience lapses in memory and trouble finding the right words. According to the Alzheimer's Association, symptoms may also include, but are not limited to:

- › Memory loss that affects day-to-day function
- › Difficulty performing familiar tasks
- › Problems with language
- › Disorientation of time and place
- › Poor or decreased judgment
- › Problems with abstract thinking
- › Misplacing things
- › Changes in mood or behavior
- › Changes in personality
- › Loss of initiative

Alzheimer's Disease can affect different areas of the brain and, as it progresses, will impair various associated abilities. Currently, it is not known for sure if an ability lost can ever be relearned. Just as each person is unique, Alzheimer's Disease affects patients, loved ones, and caretakers differently.

DEMENTIA TREATMENT

When symptoms of dementia are brought upon by substance abuse or severe depression — called "pseudo-dementia" — the patient's condition can be treated and cured. In most cases, however, dementia can only be treated—not cured. If any of the aforementioned symptoms are present, a medical assessment is the optimal plan of action to obtain a diagnosis and care plan.

ALZHEIMER'S TREATMENT

It is not fully known how to prevent or cure Alzheimer's Disease, but continued research will shed light on the disease and its effects on the brain. Currently, scientists are studying Alzheimer's Disease from several different angles.

Advances in medical genetics, pharmacological therapy, and stem cell research hold promise for the Alzheimer's patient. All scientific research, past, present and future, serves to promote more accurate diagnoses and provide more effective care plans for patients, loved ones and caretakers.

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For more information or to reach a local BrightStar Care Team, please call 866-618-STAR (7827) today, or visit www.brightstarcare.com.

DIAGNOSING MILD-TO-MODERATE DEMENTIA CASES

Diagnosing even mild-to-moderate dementia cases can be difficult. In fact, more than half of such cases are not recognized by physicians, according to a review of the literature at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. Family members and caregivers, in addition to many physicians, often overlook a decline in cognitive function as well.

As Baby Boomers age, the number of Alzheimer's cases is expected to surge from the already five million cases. Increased awareness and diagnosis will provide optimal care for the aging population.

To improve prompt diagnosis, Diana Kerwin, MD, assistant professor of medicine and geriatrics, offers the following recommendations published in a recent issue of The Journal of Family Practice:

- › Avoid age bias when determining the need for cognitive screening
- › Screen the vulnerable elderly, or individuals 65 years of age and older who are at high risk of death or functional decline, at the initial visit and annually after
- › Test all patients undergoing cognitive screening for depression as well.



WHAT IS "JUST AGING," AND WHAT COULD BE MORE?

Many people find it difficult to distinguish between aging and disease, which can often be stressful and scary. Here are some helpful tips to guide you through the process:

Someone with Alzheimer's...

- › Forgets entire experiences
- › Rarely remembers later
- › Is gradually unable to follow written/spoken directions
- › Is gradually unable to use notes as reminders
- › Is gradually unable to care for self

Someone with Age-Related Memory Changes...

- › Forgets part of an experience
- › Often remembers later
- › Is usually able to follow written/spoken directions
- › Is usually able to use notes as reminders
- › Is usually able to care for self

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POST-DIAGNOSIS SUPPORT SYSTEM

Being diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease can flood the patient and their loved ones with a variety of emotions and concerns. The key to a successful care plan is a solid foundation—a support system. According to the Alzheimer's Association, friends, neighbors and extended family are important sources of support for the patient and family. Having the disease, or caring for someone who does, can be challenging.

BrightStar Care understands how difficult it can be to cope with an Alzheimer's diagnosis and can serve as a resource to families in need. BrightStar Care offices work with the Alzheimer's Association to continue their education about the disease. Our in-home care services can offer a wide range of assistance to meet you and your family's unique needs. Whether it's relieving loved ones who are providing care from their duties or providing full-time care 24 hours a day, seven days a week, BrightStar Care is dedicated to providing quality professionals to administer premium care to meet your needs in the comfort of your own home.



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