

Fact Sheet

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive, irreversible brain disorder that affects memory, thinking, and language skills. Over time, people living with Alzheimer's disease may become unable to carry out daily activities. African American and Hispanic/Latino populations are disproportionately affected.

Office of Minority Health and Health Equity

What is Alzheimer's disease?

Alzheimer's disease causes brain cells to stop functioning, lose connections with other brain cells, and die over the course of many years. Exactly why this happens is unknown. In advanced stages, a person living with Alzheimer's disease will experience dementia: a decline in brain function severe enough to interfere with daily life.

What are the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease?

One of the earliest noticeable symptoms is worsening or more frequent memory loss or confusion about time or place, for example. Other symptoms involve changes in thinking and language skills such as problems with handling money, completing tasks, or struggling to speak or write. The mood or personality of a person living with Alzheimer's disease may be affected, and they may withdraw from work or social activities.



Who is affected by Alzheimer's disease?

Age is the best known risk factor for Alzheimer's disease with symptoms usually appearing after age 60. Older African American and Hispanic/Latino adults are more likely to have Alzheimer's disease than older white adults.

You may also be at higher risk of developing Alzheimer's disease if you:

- Are a woman.
- Have ever had a moderate or severe head injury.
- Have heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, or obesity.
- Have an immediate family member with Alzheimer's disease.
- Engage in few physical, mental, or social activities.

How is Alzheimer's disease diagnosed?

No single test is available to definitively diagnose the disease. Your health care provider will conduct a medical evaluation and rule out other potential causes of your symptoms. Early detection is key, so it's important to get an assessment by your health care provider at the first sign of symptoms.

How is Alzheimer's disease treated?

Although there is no cure, several FDA-approved medications are available to help people maintain mental function and slow or delay the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. Your health care provider may also recommend treatments to help manage behavioral symptoms such as anxiety and other health conditions like high blood pressure.

Alzheimer's disease and clinical trials

The FDA encourages diverse participation in clinical trials. If you think a clinical trial may be right for you, talk to your health care provider. You can also search for clinical trials in your area at www.clinicaltrials.gov.

For more information on health equity, visit www.fda.gov/healthequity.