



## Common Symptoms & Stages of Early Onset Alzheimer's Disease

It is important to remember that each individual experiences early onset Alzheimer's disease in their own unique way, and there is no set timetable for how long each stage will last for an individual. Not every person will experience each of these changes and the changes do not necessarily occur in a linear fashion. For example, an individual may experience behavioral changes that are common in the middle stage before they experience changes that are more common in the early stage.

This information is to be used as a guide of what **could** be expected throughout the progression of the disease. One of the most important things to remember about this disease is that it is unpredictable and does not follow a set course.

### Early Stage

The individual may begin to notice problems with their memory or may begin to have difficulty concentrating. Often times, the first sign of a problem occurs in the work place.

Initial changes could include:

- \* Not remembering appointments
- \* Losing train of thought in a conversation
- \* Difficulty recognizing familiar faces
- \* Losing track of time
- \* Difficulty concentrating
- \* Difficulty remembering recent information or events
- \* Getting lost (especially when driving)
- \* Struggles with finding words when having a conversation
- \* Misplacing items

As the individual progresses through the early stage, additional changes could include:

- \* Difficulty or unable to make decisions or choices
- \* Making accusations or showing signs of paranoia
- \* Difficulty separating fact from fiction
- \* Making mistakes in judgment
- \* Difficulty or inability to translate thoughts into actions
- \* Withdrawing from social situations
- \* Becoming frustrated and/or angry more frequently
- \* Misusing familiar words
- \* Speaking in rambling sentences
- \* Difficulty when writing
- \* Losing ability to sequence tasks
- \* Reacting less quickly

### **Middle Stage**

The individual is likely to be experiencing major gaps in their memory, and their cognitive abilities are declining. They may experience the following changes:

- \* Begin to have difficulty with activities of daily living (i.e. dressing, grooming, bathing, eating, toileting)
- \* Difficulty with knowing the day of the week, month or time of day
- \* Loss of fine motor skills (i.e. being able to button a shirt)
- \* Difficulty understanding the written word
- \* Has minimal attention span
- \* Possibly displays more sexual interest
- \* Engages in repetitious speech and actions
- \* Has problems with social appropriateness
- \* Starts to have hallucinations and/or delusions
  - o Hallucinations – seeing things that are not there
  - o Delusions – believing that they are being conspired against, etc.
- \* Shows frequent changes of emotions
- \* Displays minimal attention span
- \* Has outbursts more frequently
- \* Shows frustration, anger and/or withdrawal more frequently

As the individual moves to the end of the middle stage, the following changes might be occurring:

- \* Needs assistance with all activities of daily living (i.e. dressing, grooming, bathing, eating, toileting)
- \* Becomes incontinent
- \* Speech becomes muddled and unintelligible
- \* Displays a downward gaze
- \* Hearing may become extremely sensitive
- \* Unable to separate or recognize sounds
- \* Walks with a shuffling gait

### **Late Stage**

This is the final stage of the disease. The following changes are commonly experienced as the individual progresses to the final stage of the disease:

- \* Loss of all language abilities
- \* Has difficulty swallowing food and/or drink
- \* Loss of ability to sit and walk
- \* Needs total care and is often confined to bed