

# Understanding Stages of Alzheimer’s Disease

## What is Alzheimer’s disease?

The brain contains billions of cells known as neurons, which enable communication within the brain and between the brain and the rest of the body via electrical and chemical signals.

In Alzheimer’s disease, two proteins - called tau and amyloid - build up in the brain, damaging neurons over time and impairing brain function. This leads to symptoms such as **memory loss, confusion, and reduced ability to perform daily functions**. Dementia is a general term used to describe this **decline in thinking abilities**. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common cause of dementia.



More than **55 million** people suffer from dementia worldwide



Up to **70%** of dementia cases are due to Alzheimer’s disease

## Alzheimer’s disease progresses gradually over time, presenting as a continuum

Alzheimer’s disease continuum is broadly divided into three stages: preclinical (no symptoms), mild cognitive impairment (MCI) due to Alzheimer’s disease, and dementia (mild, moderate, and severe) due to Alzheimer’s disease.

### Preclinical Alzheimer’s disease

The brain undergoes changes associated with Alzheimer’s disease several years before noticeable symptoms appear. This stage is called preclinical Alzheimer’s disease.

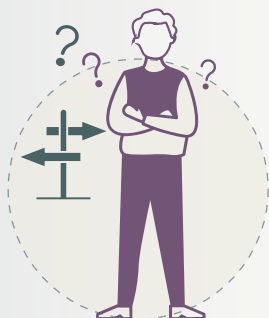


### MCI due to Alzheimer’s disease

People may initially have MCI as an early sign of Alzheimer’s disease. Such individuals may experience symptoms like mild memory loss or confusion that are noticeable to themselves and their families. But these changes do not affect their daily functions.

### Mild dementia due to Alzheimer’s disease

As Alzheimer’s progresses, the symptoms become more noticeable. People may have trouble remembering the location of regular objects or information that was newly learned. Due to increasing trouble with their memory, they may require assistance with certain activities.



### Moderate dementia due to Alzheimer’s disease

As the condition worsens, individuals need more support and care. They may experience confusion with place and become lost, have more trouble communicating with others, and experience changes in their personality, such as being frequently agitated or aggressive.

### Severe dementia due to Alzheimer’s disease

As the disease approaches its final phase, individuals require constant care in all aspects of their daily lives. They are unable to respond to their surroundings and experience significant physical health challenges, such as being unable to walk or sit without support, losing the ability to swallow, and becoming susceptible to infections.



## Some common early symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease to look out for include:

- Forgetting recent conversations or events
- Struggling to follow conversations
- Asking same questions repetitively
- Becoming increasingly disorganized
- Difficulty planning or solving problems
- Trouble completing familiar tasks
- Confusion with time or place
- Misplacing items
- Changes in mood and personality

## Getting a timely Alzheimer’s diagnosis is important

In the early stages, it can be hard to distinguish the symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease from those of normal ageing. If the memory problems impact your everyday life, talk to your doctor. Getting a timely Alzheimer’s diagnosis can provide access to the proper support and treatment, while helping you plan for the future.

### Where can I find more information and support?

- [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)
- [www.alzheimer-europe.org](http://www.alzheimer-europe.org)
- <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-symptoms-and-diagnosis>
- [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)
- [www.alzheimersresearchuk.org](http://www.alzheimersresearchuk.org)
- <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/dementia>