

What help is available?

There is a range of support available to help people with Alzheimer's disease and their carers.

Health services

Health services that care for people with Alzheimer's disease include GPs, old age psychiatrists, mental health nurses, community nurses, health visitors and physiotherapists.

Social services

Social services can arrange a community care assessment for people with Alzheimer's disease, to assess the specific needs they require. Services vary in each area and can include meals on wheels, home day care and carers respite care.

Patient support organisations

The Alzheimer's Society (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and Alzheimer Scotland can provide a range of support to both people with Alzheimer's disease and their carers. Other patient support organisations include Help the Aged/Age Concern and Carers UK.

Pension and employment

The Pensions Service and Citizens Advice Bureau can advise people with Alzheimer's disease and their carers on employment legislations, social security benefits and housing rights.

Legal issues

Office of the Public Guardian (in England, Scotland and Wales), and the Office of Care and Protection (in Northern Ireland) can advise people with Alzheimer's disease to appoint people to manage their property or investments.

Living with Alzheimer's disease, and caring for someone with the condition, can be difficult and emotional. Do speak to your doctor and local patient support organisations to find out what services are available to support you

MEMORY matters



What is Alzheimer's disease?

Information for people with Alzheimer's disease and their carers



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What is Alzheimer's disease?

Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia affecting around 417,000 people in the UK. The term 'dementia' covers a range of conditions where brain cells are damaged and so the brain cannot work as well as it should.

In Alzheimer's disease, 'plaques' and 'tangles' develop in the brain leading to death of brain cells. People with Alzheimer's disease also have a shortage of the chemical 'acetylcholine' in their brain, which is needed for sending messages within the brain.

Who gets Alzheimer's disease and why?

No single factor has yet been identified as a cause for Alzheimer's disease. It is likely that a combination of age, genetic inheritance, environmental factors, diet and general health are responsible.

Age is the greatest risk factor for all forms of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. Dementia affects one in 14 people over the age of 65, and one in six over the age of 80. However, in the UK, at least 15,000 people with dementia are under the age of 65.

The earlier a person gets diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, the sooner they and their family can come to terms with the situation, make plans for the future, and access services that can help them

What are the common symptoms to look out for?

These may include:

- Loss of short term memory
- Confusion
- Poor judgment
- Unwillingness to make decisions
- Anxiety
- Agitation or distress over perceived change
- Inability to manage everyday tasks

It is important to remember that every person with Alzheimer's disease is different and so their experiences will not be the same.

Alzheimer's disease can only be diagnosed by ruling out other possible causes of the symptoms so a full medical assessment is important. There are treatments for Alzheimer's disease available which may help slow down the progression of the symptoms, but they are not suitable for everyone.

What happens to people with Alzheimer's disease?

As Alzheimer's disease progresses, people will need more support from their carers. Gradually, over a period of years, most functions of the brain will be affected and so they will probably need help with daily activities such as getting dressed, eating or going to the toilet.

If you are worried about yourself or a relative, make an appointment to see the GP. The GP can find out if there is a reason for your symptoms, and they may refer you, or your relative, to see a hospital specialist for tests