



# SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF EARLY ONSET ALZHEIMER'S

Dementia is an overall term for a progressive brain disease, the most common type is known as Alzheimer's, but there are many different types of dementia with varying causes. Here are some common signs and symptoms:

## COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

Struggling with communication may seem common, but this is more than a forgotten word. The challenges from mild cognitive impairment can impact daily life – it is the inability to connect the right words to your thoughts, making it harder to participate in conversations. As your brain health declines, so does your capability to follow along in conversations, respond appropriately, process information that is received and even follow directions for a task.

## CONFUSION

This can be extremely frightening. Randomly forgetting where you are and how you got to that location is very common and typically can be one type of confusion that is experienced. It's more than just losing track of time, recognizing one is lost in a familiar place can be very alarming during and after the event. It may result in medication mismanagement – forgetting to take pills or taking them twice. Another example is paying a bill twice or thinking that a donation request is a bill, sending the requestor funds.

## MOOD AND BEHAVIOR ISSUES

Early-onset Alzheimer's can cause anxiety, often the person knows there is something wrong, but doesn't know what it is, which can be overwhelming and scary, to say the least. These changes can impact one's personality, overall mood, as well as judgment of abilities, which can result in a multitude of issues. There can be unexplained mood swings, anger, agitation or even depression and suspicion.

## CONCENTRATION AND FOCUS DECLINE

As the brain's health deteriorates, so does the ability to concentrate and focus, which can be a classic early sign of changes. One may find it difficult to follow a storyline due to the lack of ability to focus or process the rapid amount of information being presented. It becomes harder to accomplish basic tasks like managing your checkbook, cooking a familiar recipe or even following the directions while driving. As the disease progresses, this problem increasingly impacts communication as well as ability to recall or even learn new information.

## LOSS OF INTEREST

Suddenly what you love to do no longer interests you, which may be as a result of the difficulty in trying to perform what used to be an easy task. This may lead to feelings of depression and apathy, which can result in withdrawing from activities of daily life. Finding joy can be more challenging. The overall progressive and failing condition of the brain makes it harder to keep up with one's previous life.

## NORMAL IS NO LONGER NORMAL

With early-onset Alzheimer's, nothing seems normal. It becomes a struggle to maintain one's daily life, familiar places become less recognizable and normal daily tasks are more challenging. Frustration may be the new normal, and lifestyle changes, more assistance and resources are now necessary to maintain one's independence and safety.

## MEMORY LOSS

Memory loss is often the most common sign that one will encounter – forgetting the day of the week, what was eaten for a meal, how to play a game or events such as attending a luncheon or party. As the brain function declines so does the ability to store new information and recall it, remote memories are often intact and are easier to retrieve. As the disease damages the brain, the ability to recall all information continues to decline, and increasing assistance is needed, for daily activities and even to manage normal body functions.