Know the 10 Signs: Early Detection Matters

“Early Detection Matters”

If we could have had a correct diagnosis even two years earlier, it would have given us more time to plan, to do the things that can result in a good quality of life and to accomplish things we always wanted to do that got put off for this reason or that.”

- Jay Smith
Wife, Patty, diagnosed 2 years after onset of symptoms

Importance of Early Detection

Today you will learn…
from people like us!!

“We're going to be part of the change”

Mary Ann has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease.

Alzheimer’s Disease vs. Typical Aging

Myth vs. Reality

► MYTH - Having a “little touch of dementia” is a typical part of aging.
► REALITY - As we age, many of our physical capabilities, including memory, diminish. But having a harder time remembering some things is very different from having a form of dementia like Alzheimer’s disease.
What is Alzheimer's disease?

► Alzheimer's is a progressive disease of the brain that destroys brain cells, causing problems with memory, thinking and behavior.
► Dementia is a general term used to describe a decline in cognitive functioning.
► Alzheimer’s disease is the most common form of dementia.
► Though some treatments are available to help with symptoms, Alzheimer’s is a disease that is eventually fatal.

Myth vs. Reality

► MYTH - If I have memory loss, that means I have Alzheimer’s disease or dementia.
► REALITY - Many people have trouble with memory loss, but it does not mean they have Alzheimer’s disease. Most do not. It is best to visit a doctor to determine the cause of the memory loss symptoms.

Risk Factors for Alzheimer’s

How the Risks Affect You

Age is the Greatest Risk Factor

► The primary risk factor is age
► The incidence is higher in women largely due to women living longer

Myth vs. Reality

► MYTH - If Alzheimer’s disease runs in your family, genetic testing will tell you whether you will get Alzheimer’s disease too.
► REALITY - Having a parent or sibling with Alzheimer’s disease does increase one’s risk of developing the disease, but genetics is not the only risk factor.

Genetics

► The gene APOE-e4 is linked to greater risk of late-onset Alzheimer’s disease
► This type of dementia is most common and associated with old age
► It’s a good idea to discuss benefits and risks of testing with a physician or genetic counselor
► Having this gene will only increase your chance of developing AD – it does not predict the disease
**Body-Brain Connection**

- Brain health comes from a healthy body, learning new things, healthy eating and an active social life
- Risk for AD or vascular dementia is increased by a damaged heart or blood vessels
- Diabetes in mid-life can lead to AD decades later
- There is a strong link between serious head injury and risk for dementia

**The 10 Warning Signs**

**“It’s not normal to forget conversations”**

Mary Ann has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease.

**Memory changes that disrupt daily life**

1. Forgetting something recently learned
   - Asking the same information over and over
   - Relying on memory aids or family members for things you used to handle alone

**“I have a strategy”**

Sue has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease.

**Challenges in planning or solving problems**

2. Problems developing or following a plan
   - Problems working with numbers
   - Problems following a familiar recipe
   - Difficulty keeping track of bills
   - Challenges concentrating
   - Taking longer than before to do common tasks
Difficulty completing familiar tasks

3. Difficulty completing daily tasks
   - Trouble driving to once-familiar places
   - Problems managing a budget at work
   - Difficulty remembering rules of a favorite game

“My biggest challenge”

Joyce has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease.

Confusion with time or place

4. Losing track of dates, seasons and passage of time
   - Forgetting where one is or how one got there

“I try to reply calmly”

John’s wife, Mary Ann, has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease.

Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships

5. Diminishing ability to track visual surroundings
   - Difficulty reading
   - Trouble judging distance
   - Problems determining color or contrast

New problems with words in speaking or writing

6. Problems following or joining a conversation
   - Difficulty tracking conversations
     - Stopping in the middle of conversations, unable to continue
     - Repeating what was already said
   - Trouble with vocabulary
     - Difficulty finding the right word
     - Calling things the wrong name
Joyce has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease.

Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps

- Putting things in unusual places e.g., wallet in fruit bowl
- Having increasing difficulty retracing steps to locate a missing item
- Accusing others of stealing

Decreased or poor judgment

- Changes in decision making and judgment
  - Poor judgment with money
    - Giving large amounts to telemarketers
    - Spending more impulsively
    - Wearing clothing inappropriate to the weather or season

Withdrawal from work or social activities

- Withdrawing from
  - Hobbies
  - Social activities
  - Work projects
  - Family gatherings
- Losing track of a favorite sports team
- Forgetting how to engage in a favorite hobby
- Avoiding social situations

Mary Ann has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease.

Changes in mood and personality

- Increasingly displaying signs of:
  - Confusion
  - Suspicion
  - Fear
  - Anxiety
  - Agitation
What should I do if I see some of the 10 signs?

► Talk with people about what you are seeing and thinking
► A visit to the doctor is indicated
► Getting the right treatment as soon as possible is crucial

“Don’t be afraid to talk about it”

Susan’s sister, Mary Ann, has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease.

Myth vs. Reality

► MYTH - There’s no point in getting diagnosed, because dementia is not curable or treatable. It will just upset my family and me, so why do it?
► REALITY - Early diagnosis is the only way to get early treatment for any diagnosis.

Diagnosis: Earlier is Better

Myth vs. Reality

► MYTH - You don’t need a complete set of diagnostic tests to know if you have Alzheimer’s disease. You can just try a medication for memory loss – if it works, you know.
► REALITY - Early treatment is best, but you have to know what you’re treating. There are many things that can cause memory loss and it is important to be thoroughly assessed.
Gary has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease.

“Doctors take time to diagnose”

Diagnostic steps
► History from patient, close family and/or friends
► Physical exam
► Mental status exam
► Neurological exam
► Brain scans

Physicians’ tests can…
► Identify disorders that may cause memory loss, confused thinking, trouble focusing attention or other symptoms similar to dementia.
► Possible disorders include:
  • Anemia or certain vitamin deficiencies
  • Excess use of alcohol
  • Medication side effects
  • Certain infections

Other forms of dementia
► Vascular dementia
► Frontotemporal dementia (FTD)
► Mixed dementia
► Lewy body dementia

If you do get diagnosed with a dementia…

With early diagnosis you can…
…get the maximum benefit from available treatments
► Explore treatments to provide a relief in symptoms
► Early treatment may help individuals remain independent longer
► Offers opportunity to participate in clinical trials
“Early diagnosis is very important”

Jestene, 75 years old, has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease.

Medications

► Some medications are designed to help relieve some of the symptoms, but none can stop progression
► Cholinesterase inhibitors may temporarily improve or slow down memory loss
► Other medications can help with mood and behavior changes
► Talk to doctors about what treatment is best

With early diagnosis you can...

...have more time to consider and plan for the future

► Participate in arranging your own care
  • Living arrangements
  • Safety, financial and legal matters
  • Transportation
► Empowers you to make decisions
► Build the right care team and social network

Plan for the Future

► Seek legal advice and services
► Identify and complete legal documents
► Make plans for medical and treatment decisions
► Make plans for finances and property
► Name a person to make decisions on your behalf when you no longer can

You are not alone: Resources to help

Your Chapter’s Services

► Care Consultation
► Information and Referral
► Support Groups
► Education
► Safety Services
Opportunity to Get Involved

If you notice signs...

► Talk about what’s happening
► See a doctor
► Find out why it’s happening and what to do about it
► Follow up on all diagnostic and treatment recommendations
► Follow up with resources from your chapter

Early Detection Matters!

Mimi has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease.