



**Is it Alzheimer's or just signs of aging?**

**10 signs every  
African-American should know**

alzheimer's  association®

## **Memory loss that disrupts everyday life is not normal aging.**

That kind of memory loss may be a symptom of *dementia*, a slow and continuous decline in memory, thinking and reasoning skills. The most common form of dementia is *Alzheimer's disease*, a disorder that results in the loss of brain cells.

Because African-Americans are more likely to have vascular disease (disorders affecting the circulatory system), they may also be at greater risk for developing Alzheimer's. Risk factors for vascular disease – like diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol – may also be risk factors for Alzheimer's and stroke-related dementia.

## 10 warning signs of Alzheimer's disease®

The Alzheimer's Association has developed a checklist to help you recognize signs of Alzheimer's disease:

- One** Memory loss
- Two** Difficulty doing familiar tasks
- Three** Problems with talking or writing
- Four** Confusion about time and place
- Five** Loss of judgment
- Six** Problems with abstract thinking
- Seven** Misplacing things
- Eight** Changes in mood or behavior
- Nine** Changes in personality
- Ten** Loss of motivation

**What's considered normal and what's not? ►**

.....  
**The way to say:**

**Alzheimer's – AHLZ-high-merz**  
**dementia – dih-MEN-shuh**

# One



## **Memory loss**

Forgetting recently learned information is one of the most common early signs of dementia. A person begins to forget more often and is unable to recall the information later.

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**What's normal? Forgetting names  
or appointments occasionally**

# Two



## **Difficulty doing familiar tasks**

People with dementia often find it hard to plan or complete everyday tasks. Individuals may lose track of the steps to prepare a meal, place a telephone call or play a game.

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**What's normal? Occasionally forgetting why you came into a room or what you planned to say**

# Three



## **Problems talking or writing**

People with Alzheimer's disease often forget simple words or substitute unusual words, making their speech or writing hard to understand. They may be unable to find their toothbrush, for example, and instead ask for "that thing for my mouth."

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**What's normal? Sometimes having trouble finding the right word**

# Four



## **Confusion about time and place**

People with Alzheimer's disease can become lost in their own neighborhoods, forget where they are and how they got there, and not know how to get back home.

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**What's normal? Forgetting the day of the week or where you were going**

# Five



## **Loss of judgment**

Those with Alzheimer's may dress inappropriately, wearing several layers on a warm day or too little clothing in the cold. They may show poor judgment about money, like giving away large sums to a scam artist.

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**What's normal? Making a questionable or debatable decision from time to time**

# Six



## **Problems with abstract thinking**

Someone with Alzheimer's disease may have unusual difficulty performing complex mental tasks, like forgetting what numbers are and how they should be used.

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**What's normal? Finding it  
challenging to balance a checkbook**

# Seven



## Misplacing things

A person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in unusual places: an iron in the freezer or a wristwatch in the sugar bowl.

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**What's normal? Misplacing keys or a wallet temporarily**

# Eight



## **Changes in mood or behavior**

Someone with Alzheimer's disease may show rapid mood swings – from calm to tears to anger – for no apparent reason.

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**What's normal? Occasionally feeling sad or moody**

# Nine



## **Changes in personality**

The personalities of people with dementia can change dramatically. They may become extremely confused, suspicious, fearful or dependent on a family member.

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**What's normal? People's personalities do change somewhat with age**

# Ten



## **Loss of motivation**

A person with Alzheimer's disease may become very passive, sitting in front of the TV for hours, sleeping more than usual or not wanting to do usual activities.

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**What's normal? Sometimes feeling  
weary of work or social obligations**

## What's the difference?

<b>Symptoms of Alzheimer's</b>	<b>Memory changes related to normal aging</b>
Forgetting whole experiences	Forgetting part of an experience
Rarely able to remember later	Often able to remember later
Gradually unable to follow written/spoken directions	Usually able to follow written/spoken directions
Gradually unable to use notes as reminders	Usually able to use notes as reminders
Gradually unable to care for oneself	Usually able to care for oneself

### Did you know?

There are more than 60 causes of memory loss other than Alzheimer's disease like:

- Depression
- Medicine side effects
- Overuse of alcohol
- Poor diet
- Stroke
- Thyroid problems

## Why see a doctor?

If you're having major memory problems, see a doctor to find the cause. If it is Alzheimer's, early diagnosis can help improve quality of life by allowing you to:

- Plan for the best life experiences to come
- Choose and receive treatments
- Prepare legal documents concerning medical care during more advanced stages of the disease
- Join the fight against Alzheimer's by advocating for policy change or enrolling in research studies
- Share experiences in an Alzheimer support group

## Did you know?

Your local Alzheimer's Association can help you find the right doctor. It is especially important that your doctor is skilled in diagnosing dementia. It is also beneficial if he or she has experience treating African-Americans.

