

# 10 EARLY SIGNS OF ABNORMAL MEMORY CHANGES





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Dementia is a general term for a decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily life. Dementia is not a specific disease. It describes a wide range of symptoms associated with a decline in memory or other thinking skills. Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia.

Many dementias are progressive, meaning symptoms get worse over time. If you or a loved one is experiencing memory difficulties or other changes in thinking skills, don't ignore them. See a doctor soon to determine the cause.

The resource was adapted from the Alzheimer's Association: "10 Early Signs and Symptoms of Alzheimer's"

For information, education, referrals, or support, call the Alzheimer's Association 24/7 helpline at 1-800-272-3900 or visit their website at [alz.org](http://alz.org).



# 1. Memory in a fog

One of the most common signs of Alzheimer's, especially in the early stages, is forgetting recently learned information. Others include forgetting important dates or events; asking for the same information over and over; relying on memory aides (e.g., reminder notes or electronic devices) or family members for things they used to handle on their own.

## **What is normal?**

Sometimes forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later.



## 2. Challenges in planning or solving problems

Some people may experience changes in their ability to develop and follow a plan or work with numbers. They may have trouble following a familiar recipe or keeping track of monthly bills. They may have difficulty concentrating and may take much longer to do things than they did before.

### **What's typical?**

Making occasional errors when balancing a checkbook.





# 3. Struggle with familiar tasks

People with Alzheimer's often find it hard to complete daily tasks. Sometimes, people may have trouble driving to a familiar location, managing a budget at work or remembering the rules of a favorite game.

## **What's typical?**

Occasionally needing help to use the settings on a microwave or to record a television show.



# 4. Confusion with time or place

People with Alzheimer's can lose track of dates, seasons and the passage of time. They may have trouble understanding something if it is not happening immediately. Sometimes they may forget where they are or how they got there.

## **What's typical?**

Getting confused about the day of the week but figuring it out later.



# 5. Images and places seem less familiar

For some people, having vision problems is a sign of Alzheimer's. They may have difficulty reading, judging distance and determining color or contrast. In terms of perception, they may pass a mirror and think someone else is in the room. They may not recognize their own reflection.

## **What's typical?**

Vision changes related to cataracts.



## 6. Words or thoughts get confused

People with Alzheimer's may have trouble following or joining a conversation. They may stop in the middle of a conversation and have no idea how to continue or they may repeat themselves. They may struggle with vocabulary, have problems finding the right word or call things by the wrong name (e.g., calling a watch a "hand clock").

### **What's typical?**

Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.





# 7. Misplacing things and losing ability to retrace steps

A person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in unusual places. They may lose things and be unable to go back over their steps to find them again. Sometimes, they may accuse others of stealing. This may occur more frequently over time.

## **What's typical?**

Misplacing things from time to time, such as a pair of glasses or the remote control.



# 8. May have slips in judgement

People with Alzheimer's may experience changes in judgement or decision making. For example, they may use poor judgement when dealing with money, giving large amounts to telemarketers.

They may pay less attention to grooming or keeping themselves clean.

## **What's typical?**

Making a bad decision once in a while.



# 9. Feel like pulling away from others

A person with Alzheimer's may start to remove themselves from hobbies, social activities, work projects or sports. They may have trouble keeping up with a favorite sports team or remembering how to complete a favorite hobby. They may also avoid being social because of the changes they have experienced.

## **What's typical?**

Sometimes feeling weary of work, family and social obligations.



# 10. Not feeling like yourself

The mood and personalities of people with Alzheimer's can change. They can become confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful or anxious. They may be easily upset at home, at work, with friends or in places where they are out of their comfort zone.

## **What's typical?**

Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.



### **Our Mission**

The mission of the Wyoming Center on Aging is to optimize the health and wellbeing of Wyoming's older residents and their caregivers through interagency partnerships, basic and applied research, community education, and clinical training and services.

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