

What If a Loved One Shows Signs of Alzheimer's Disease? Start a Conversation.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, about one in nine Americans age 65 or older has Alzheimer's disease.¹ Increasing age is the greatest known risk factor. ¹ Sometimes symptoms of Alzheimer's disease are confused with those of normal aging, so it's helpful to know the difference. Several warning signs of Alzheimer's disease are highlighted here.

Noticing some of these or other signs of problems with thinking and behavior in a loved one is often alarming and scary, but don't ignore them. Early detection and treatment of Alzheimer's disease can make a big difference in quality of life for both of you. Starting a conversation with your loved one about what you've noticed is the first step. It's also one of the hardest. Here are a few tips:

Plan a time and place. Choose a time to have the conversation when you and your loved one aren't busy or tired. If you include others in your talk, keep the group small. Pick a place that is familiar, comfortable, quiet, and free of distractions.

Choose supportive family members and words. Bringing up the possibility of Alzheimer's disease can be uncomfortable for both your loved one and you. Include family members who will be supportive and consider who can best lead the conversation. Think about what you're going to say in advance to make the conversation easier. It's helpful to begin by asking your loved one if they've noticed any differences in their behavior or memory. They might be defensive or embarrassed, so tell them you're concerned and give a few examples of what you have noticed.

Talk and listen with compassion. Keep your words simple, gentle, and reassuring. And be patient. Listen when your loved one expresses their own worry about memory loss or their difficulty in doing usual activities. They might be relieved to know that you're willing to discuss it with them. **Remember, this is a process and may take several conversations with your loved one.**

Encourage them to see a doctor. Explain that a doctor will talk with them about their concerns and

Some Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

It's time to start a conversation if your loved one:

- Often misplaces objects and cannot retrace their steps to find it.
- Uncharacteristically withdraws from work or social activities.
- Is experiencing memory loss that is disrupting their life.
Begins to wander and get lost.
- Takes longer to complete normal daily tasks.

¹ Alzheimer's Association. Alzheimer's disease facts and figures. <https://www.alz.org/media/Documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf>. 2022. Accessed April 22, 2022

begin looking for what is causing the symptoms. To provide support, offer to go to the doctor with them. Write down your concerns and the changes you've noticed to share with the doctor. Tell the doctor what's important to your culture and family background. Speak up when you have questions. Take notes and ask the doctor to explain something when you don't understand. Before you leave the visit, be sure to make your next appointment.

The Alzheimer's Disease Program at the Texas Department of State Health Services works to increase awareness of the disease and provide helpful information to individuals, families, friends, and caregivers. Visit the program's website at dshs.texas.gov/alzheimers to learn more about Alzheimer's disease, ways to start a conversation, and available community resources. Visit the program's website at dshs.texas.gov/alzheimers to learn more about Alzheimer's disease, ways to start a conversation, and available community resources.