

Is it Alzheimer's disease or old age?

This table can be a handy resource to compare how Alzheimer's disease can differ to normal signs of ageing. However, please remember that everyone experiences the disease differently. If you notice any of these changes, a proper diagnosis should always be carried out by a healthcare professional.¹⁻⁴

NORMAL AGEING	SIGN	ALZHEIMER'S DEMENTIA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes forgetting names or appointments but remembering them later Misplacing things from time to time, such as a pair of glasses 	<p>Memory loss that affects daily life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forgetting names of close friends and family or recent events such as visitors that they had that day Asking for the same information over and over, and relying on memory aides Putting objects in unusual places and being unable to retrace steps to find them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being a bit slower to react and getting less able to juggle multiple tasks, especially when distracted Occasionally making mistakes when doing finances 	<p>Trouble with planning and problem-solving</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having a lot of difficulty concentrating and getting very confused when planning or thinking things through Struggling to develop and follow a plan, such as following a familiar recipe Having trouble keeping track of monthly bills or generally work with numbers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes having trouble finding the right word Needing to concentrate harder to keep up with a conversation, especially if many people are speaking at once 	<p>Problems with language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequently having trouble finding the right word or calling things by the wrong name Having trouble following or joining a conversation Stopping in the middle of a conversation and having no idea on how to continue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting confused about the day of the week, but figuring it out later Forgetting why they entered a room but remembering again quickly 	<p>Confusing the time or place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Losing track of the date, season and the passage of time Forgetting where they are or how they got there, even if they are in a familiar place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making a bad decision once in a while 	<p>Decreased or poor judgement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequently poor judgement when dealing with money and assessing risks, such as giving large amounts of money to telemarketers Paying less attention to grooming and hygiene
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision changes related to cataracts or other changes in the eyes, such as cloudy vision 	<p>Problems with visual perceptual skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty interpreting visual information, such as reading, judging distance or misinterpreting patterns Problems with parking the car, driving safely
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasionally needing help with recording a television show or changing the settings on a microwave 	<p>Being unable to complete familiar tasks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having trouble getting to a familiar location or remembering the rules of a favourite game
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes feeling a bit low or anxious Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted 	<p>Changes in mood, personality and behaviour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting unusually sad, anxious or frightened, and becoming easily upset Outbursts and sudden aggressive reactions even if that was not a known characteristic of the person
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes feeling weary of work, family and social obligations 	<p>Withdrawal from work and social activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removing from hobbies, social activities, work projects or sports Avoiding being social because of the changes they are experiencing



1) Alzheimer's Association. Is it Alzheimer's or just signs of aging? 2011; 2) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Alzheimer's disease and healthy ageing. Healthy brain initiative. Accessed February 23, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/healthybrain/ten-warning-signs.html>; 3) Alzheimer Society. Canada. Accessed February 23, 2022. <https://alzheimer.ca/en/about-dementia/do-i-have-dementia/differences-between-normal-ageing-dementia>; 4) Alzheimer's society. Normal ageing vs dementia. Accessed February 23, 2022. <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/symptoms-and-diagnosis/how-dementia-progresses/normal-ageing-vs-dementia>.