

Alzheimer's Disease



Overview

This is a degenerative disease that affects the brain. It's the most common form of dementia. It generally affects people aged 65 years or older. But in a small percentage of people, it develops earlier.

Causes

The cause of Alzheimer's disease is not fully understood. It may develop as a result of several factors. Genetics, lifestyle and environment may all play a role. Alzheimer's causes changes within the brain. There is an abnormal buildup of specific proteins. And the brain shrinks.

Symptoms

Alzheimer's is a progressive disease. The earliest symptoms may go unnoticed. The symptoms may begin with forgetfulness and mild confusion. The person may have trouble remembering recent conversations or familiar words. The person may forget the names of family members and close friends. Personal items may get lost, or kept in unusual places. As Alzheimer's progresses, thinking and reasoning may become difficult. Familiar tasks, such as driving and cooking, become harder and then impossible. The person may need help getting dressed or using the toilet. You may notice personality changes, too. The person may become depressed, anxious and withdrawn. The person may become irritable and aggressive, with rapid mood swings. A person with Alzheimer's may experience delusions, and may begin to wander.

Treatment

There is no cure for Alzheimer's, but medications can help slow its affect on the brain. Supportive care is important for a person who has this disease. A healthcare provider can help create a care plan that is right for your needs.