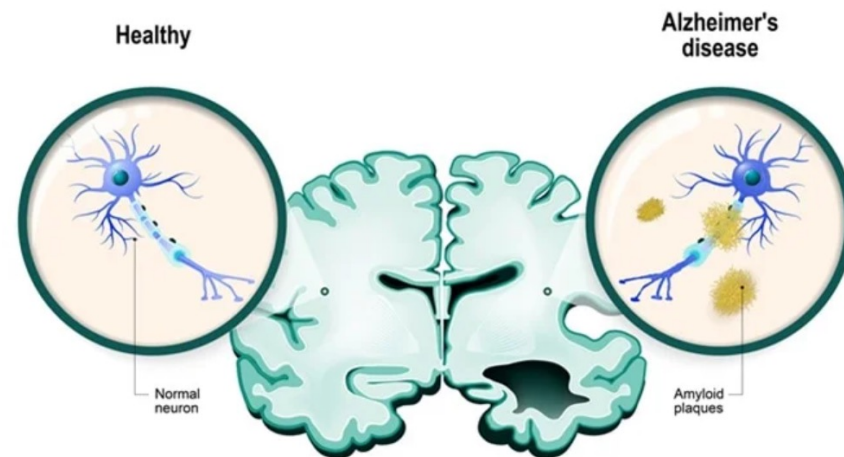
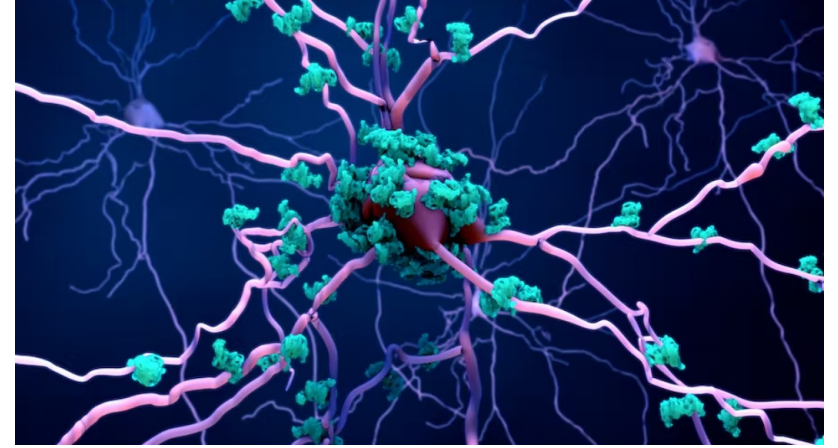


Alzheimer's Disease

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Overview



- It is a progressive neurological disorder which causes brain to shrink and brain cells to die
- It is a specific type of dementia causing memory loss, confusion, difficulty thinking/problem solving and inability to function independently
- It is one of the top 10 common chronic conditions in older adults per National council on aging (NCO).

Signs and Symptoms



- Memory loss is the key symptom with early signs of difficulty remembering (recent events/conversations), organizing thoughts
- Disease progression can affect the individual's ability to function independently and carry on his/her daily activities
- Common occurrences include-repeating statements and questions, forgetting conversations, routinely misplacing possessions, getting lost in familiar places, forgetting names of family members/friends, trouble finding the correct words to identify objects, thoughts or take part in conversations
- It can cause changes in personality and behavior leading to problems including depression, anxiety, social withdrawal, distrust in others, changes in sleeping habits, mood swings, delusions and many more.

Cause

- Basic level: Brain proteins fail to function normally. As the disease progresses, nerve cells in the brain are damaged and lose connection with each other, no longer communicate and eventually die.



Risk factors

- Increasing age- greatest risk factor
- Genetics and family history
- Gender- More prevalent in women than men
- Head trauma
- Poor sleeping habits
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Lifestyle and heart health



Prevention

- Not a preventable condition but a number of lifestyle risk factors for Alzheimer's can be modified by engaging in regular exercises, proper nutrition by eating a diet of fresh produce, healthy oils and foods low in saturated fats, following treatment guidelines to manage high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, and quitting smoking
- Participating in social events, reading, playing board games, creating art, playing an instrument and engaging in activities that require mental and social engagement can help preserve cognitive skills later in life



Diagnosis

- An important part of diagnosing Alzheimer's disease is being able to explain the symptoms that are impacting the daily life and tests that are done to assess memory and thinking skills.



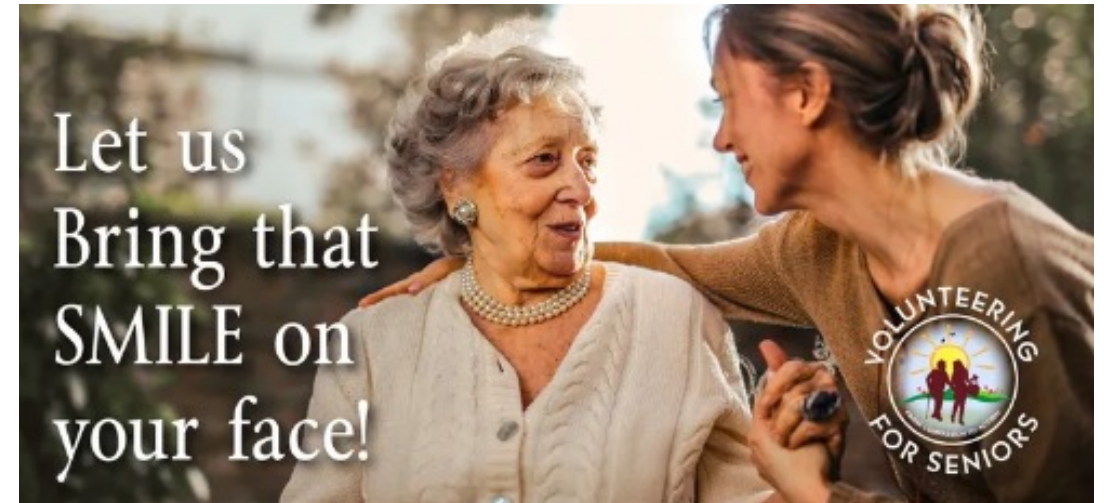
Treatment



- Medications can help for a time with memory symptoms and other cognitive changes.
- Treatment plan can also include creating a safe and supportive environment for a patient with Alzheimer's disease including establishing and strengthening routine habits and minimizing memory-demanding tasks.
 1. Keeping personal belongings in the same place at home
 2. Arranging finances to be on automatic payment and automatic deposits
 3. Making sure regular appointments are on the same day at the same time as much as possible
 4. Using a calendar or whiteboard at home to track daily schedules.
 5. Keeping photographs of family members/friends and other meaningful objects around the house
 6. Socializing and social activities can help with feelings of loneliness and social isolation.
 7. Enrolling in support groups for Alzheimer's

Caring for the Caregiver

- Caring for Alzheimer's patient can take a toll on the caregiver's physical health.
- Some ways to help a caregiver:
 1. Learning about the disease as much as you can
 2. Asking questions of doctors, social workers and others involved in the caregiving
 3. Calling on friends/family members for help when you need it
 4. Taking a break everyday
 5. Spending time with your friends
 6. Taking care of your health (eating healthy meals, regular exercises)
 7. Joining a support group



References:

- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/alzheimers-disease/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20350453>
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- <https://www.ncoa.org/article/the-top-10-most-common-chronic-conditions-in-older-adults>

