

**Table 18.1.** Seven Stages of Alzheimer's

Stage 1:	<p><i>No impairment (normal function)</i></p> <p>The person does not experience any memory problems. An interview with a medical professional does not show any evidence of symptoms of dementia.</p>
Stage 2:	<p><i>Very mild cognitive decline (may be normal age-related changes or earliest signs of Alzheimer's disease)</i></p> <p>The person may feel as if he or she is having memory lapses—forgetting familiar words or the location of everyday objects. But no symptoms of dementia can be detected during a medical examination or by friends, family, or coworkers.</p>
Stage 3:	<p><i>Mild cognitive decline (early-stage Alzheimer's can be diagnosed in some, but not all, individuals with these symptoms)</i></p> <p>Friends, family, or coworkers begin to notice difficulties. During a detailed medical interview, doctors may be able to detect problems in memory or concentration. Common stage 3 difficulties include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Noticeable problems coming up with the right word or name</li><li>• Trouble remembering names when introduced to new people</li><li>• Having noticeably greater difficulty performing tasks in social or work settings</li><li>• Forgetting material that one has just read</li><li>• Losing or misplacing a valuable object</li><li>• Increasing trouble with planning or organizing</li></ul>
Stage 4:	<p><i>Moderate cognitive decline (mild or early-stage Alzheimer's disease)</i></p> <p>At this point, a careful medical interview should be able to detect clear-cut symptoms in several areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Forgetfulness of recent events</li><li>• Impaired ability to perform challenging mental arithmetic—for example, counting backward from 100 by 7's</li><li>• Greater difficulty performing complex tasks, such as planning dinner for guests, paying bills, or managing finances</li><li>• Forgetfulness about one's own personal history</li><li>• Becoming moody or withdrawn, especially in socially or mentally challenging situations</li></ul>
Stage 5:	<p><i>Moderately severe cognitive decline (moderate or mid-stage Alzheimer's disease)</i></p> <p>Gaps in memory and thinking are noticeable, and individuals begin to need help with day-to-day activities. At this stage, those with Alzheimer's may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be unable to recall their own address or telephone number or the high school or college from which they graduated</li><li>• Become confused about where they are or what day it is</li><li>• Have trouble with less challenging mental arithmetic; such as counting backward from 40 by subtracting 4's or from 20 by 2's</li><li>• Need help choosing proper clothing for the season or the occasion</li><li>• Still remember significant details about themselves and their family</li><li>• Still require no assistance with eating or using the toilet</li></ul>

(Continued)

**Table 18.1.** (Continued)

Stage 6:	<p><i>Severe cognitive decline (moderately severe or mid-stage Alzheimer's disease)</i></p> <p>Memory continues to worsen, personality changes may take place, and individuals need extensive help with daily activities. At this stage, individuals may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lose awareness of recent experiences as well as of their surroundings</li><li>• Remember their own name but have difficulty with their personal history</li><li>• Distinguish familiar and unfamiliar faces but have trouble remembering the name of a spouse or caregiver</li><li>• Need help dressing properly and may, without supervision, make mistakes such as putting pajamas over daytime clothes or shoes on the wrong feet</li><li>• Experience major changes in sleep patterns—sleeping during the day and becoming restless at night</li><li>• Need help handling details of toileting (e.g., flushing the toilet, wiping or disposing of tissue properly)</li><li>• Have increasingly frequent trouble controlling their bladder or bowels</li><li>• Experience major personality and behavioral changes, including suspiciousness and delusions (such as believing that their caregiver is an impostor) or compulsive, repetitive behavior like hand-wringing or tissue shredding</li><li>• Tend to wander or become lost</li></ul>
Stage 7:	<p><i>Very severe cognitive decline (severe or late-stage Alzheimer's disease)</i></p> <p>In the final stage of this disease, individuals lose the ability to respond to their environment, to carry on a conversation and, eventually, to control movement. They may still say words or phrases.</p> <p>At this stage, individuals need help with much of their daily personal care, including eating or using the toilet. They may also lose the ability to smile, to sit without support, and to hold their heads up. Reflexes become abnormal. Muscles grow rigid. Swallowing impaired.</p>

It is difficult to place a person with Alzheimer's in a specific stage as stages may overlap.  
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**Table 18.2.** Ten Signs of Alzheimer's

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### **1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life**

One of the most common signs of Alzheimer's is memory loss, especially 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's a typical age-related change? Sometimes forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later.*

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### **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 take much longer to do things than they did before. *What's a typical age-related change? Making occasional errors when balancing a checkbook.*

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### **3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work, or at leisure**

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 a typical age-related change? Occasionally needing help to use the settings on a microwave or to record a television show.*

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### **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 a typical age-related change? Getting confused about the day of the week but figuring it out later.*

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### **5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships**

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 realize they are the person in the mirror. *What's a typical age-related change? Vision changes related to cataracts.*

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### **6. New problems with words in speaking or writing**

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 a typical age-related change? Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.*

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### **7. Misplacing things and losing the 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 a typical age-related change? Misplacing things from time to time, such as a pair of glasses or the remote control.*

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### **8. Decreased or poor judgment**

People with Alzheimer's may experience changes in judgment or decision making. For example, they may use poor judgment when dealing with money, giving large amounts to telemarketers. They may pay less attention to grooming or keeping themselves clean. *What's a typical age-related change? Making a bad decision once in a while.*

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**Table 18.2.** (Continued)

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**9. Withdrawal from work or social activities**

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 a typical age-related change? Sometimes feeling weary of work, family, and social obligations.*

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**10. Changes in mood and personality**

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 a typical age-related change? Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.*

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**Table 18.3.** Medications for Memory Loss

Brand Name	Generic Name	Approved for	Side Effects
<i>Cholinesterase inhibitors</i>			
Aricept®	Donepezil	All stages	Nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, increased frequency of bowel movements
Exelon®	Rivastigmine	Mild to moderate	Nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, increased frequency of bowel movements
Razadyne®	Glantamine	Mild to moderate	Nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, increased frequency of bowel movements
Cognex®	Tacrine	Mild to moderate	Nausea, vomiting, possible liver damage (rarely prescribed due to more serious side effects)
<i>Glutamate activity regulator</i>			
Namenda®	Memantine	Moderate–severe	Headache, constipation, confusion, dizziness