

Early Warning Signs of Cognitive Changes Outside of Normal Aging

A tool for care prescribers, case workers and health care professionals



What Individual May Be Experiencing

Warning signs of cognitive changes that may not be typical for a person's normal aging process:

- Memory loss that disrupts daily life
- Challenges in planning or solving problems
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work, or at leisure
- Confusion with time or place
- Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships
- New problems with words in speaking or writing
- Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
- Decreased or poor judgment
- Withdrawal from work or social activities
- Changes in mood and personality

How to Advise

Discuss cognitive changes that are impacting daily living:

- [10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Worksheet](#)
- [10 Steps to Approach Memory Concerns Worksheet](#)

Schedule an appointment with primary care provider to discuss concerns (after assessment of symptoms, primary care provider may refer to specialty services through a memory diagnostic clinic, neurology department, or neuropsychology department for further evaluation)

- [Principles of a Dignified Diagnosis](#)

Prepare for the appointment

- Document any changes in your health, including your mood, memory and behaviors.
- Make a note of any changes you've noticed since your last appointment.
- Create a list of current prescriptions and over-the-counter medications.
- Write down any vitamins or supplements you've added to your medication regimen.
- Make a list of questions you want to ask.

Resources to Share

Alzheimer's Association Online Resources

- [10 Signs of Alzheimer's](#)
- [Life After Diagnosis](#)
- [Medical Tests for Diagnosing Alzheimer's](#)
- [Memory Loss Concerns](#)
- [Visiting Your Doctor](#)
- [Why Get Checked](#)

Education

[10 Warning Signs Online Education \(Free\)](#)

For more information about the various stages of dementia and local resources:

Alzheimer's Association

www.alz.org/wi

24/7 Helpline 800.272.3900

ADRC of Waukesha County

www.waukeshacounty.gov/adrc

262.548.7848



Mild Neurocognitive Disorder - Mild Cognitive/Vascular Impairment

A tool for care prescribers, case workers and health care professionals



What Individual May Be Experiencing

Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) causes slight by noticeable and measurable decline in cognitive abilities, including memory and thinking.

People living with MCI, especially MCI involving memory problems, are more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease or other dementias.

However, MCI does not always lead to dementia. In some individuals, MCI reverts to normal cognition or remains stable.

Symptoms:

- Amnesic MCI: MCI that primarily affects memory. A person may start to forget important information that he or she would previously have recalled easily, such as appointments, conversations or recent events.
- Nonamnesic MCI: MCI that affects thinking skills other than memory, including the ability to make sound decisions, judge the time or sequence of steps needed to complete a complex task, or visual perception.

How to Advise

- Discuss cognitive changes that are impacting daily living
- Schedule an appointment with primary care provider to discuss concerns (after assessment of symptoms, primary care provider may refer to specialty care services through a memory diagnostic clinic, neurology department, or neuropsychology department for further evaluation)
 - Prepare for the appointment, take trusted family member or friend to appointments
- Schedule a care consultation with the Alzheimer's Association to learn about Early Stage Programs and Services available online and in local community
- Complete Advanced Directives
- Meet with elder law attorney and financial planner to learn about long term care planning options
- Schedule a meeting with the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) to discuss long-term options

Resources to Share

Online Resources for persons living with MCI:

- [About Mild Cognitive Impairment](#)
- [ALZConnected® - online community](#)
- [Clinical Trials](#)
- [Living well](#)

Online Resources for care partners:

- [Early Stage Caregiving](#)
- [Financial and Legal Planning](#)
- [Safety](#)

Recommended Activities:

- Education Program: Living Well with Chronic Conditions; Legal & Financial Planning
- Early Stage Support Groups
- Memory Café's
- Silver Sneakers or other exercise programs
- Utilization of Assistive Technology such as GPS navigators/locators
- Occupational therapy driving assessment

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Early-Stage Dementia (mild)

A tool for care prescribers, case workers and health care professionals



What Individual May Be Experiencing

- In the early stages of dementia, most people function independently. A person may still drive, take part in social activities, volunteer and even work.
- It is common in the early stages of dementia for the person living with the diagnosis to experience increased episodes of confusion which cause anxiety.
- The person may need cues and reminders to help with memory. The person may start to need help with the following activities:
 - Keeping appointments
 - Remembering places of work or names
 - Recalling familiar places or people
 - Managing money
 - Keeping track of medications
 - Planning or organizing
 - Transportation
- Care partners often start to feel more emotional ups and downs. Emotions care partners may experience include:
 - Denial
 - Fear
 - Stress/Anxiety
 - Anger/Frustration
 - Grief/Depression

How to Advise

- The care partner's primary role is to provide support and companionship, and help with planning for the future.
- Consider taking advantage of available treatments, participating in clinical trials, attending local early stage programs and services
- Begin building an informal care and support team with family members, close friends, neighbors and faith based community connections.
- Care partners should work to support the person living with dementia by helping them to remain healthy, active, engaged, and as independent as possible.
- Care partners can do this by promoting the following activities:
 - Encourage physical activity.
 - Prepare meals that maintain a healthy diet (low in fat, high in vegetables, protein).
 - Create a daily routine which promotes quality sleep and social engagement with others.
 - Work together with the person living with dementia to find ways to help them relax.

Resources to Share

Online resources for persons living with dementia:

- [ALZ Connected® - Online community](#)
- [Just Diagnosed](#)
- [Online Training Center](#) (recommended courses: Living with Alzheimer's for people with Alzheimer's, Living with Alzheimer's: For Younger Onset-Alzheimer's)
- [TrailMatch](#) - Clinical Trials

Online resources for care partners:

- [About Alzheimer's and dementia](#)
- [What is dementia](#)
- [Types of dementia](#)
- [Accepting the Diagnosis](#)
- [Early Stage Caregiving](#)
- [Caregiver Health](#)
- [Safety](#)
- [Financial and Legal Planning](#)
- [ALZ Connected](#)
- [Online Training Center](#) (recommended courses: Dementia Conversations, Legal & Financial Planning for Alzheimer's disease, Living with Alzheimer's: For Caregivers, Early Stage, Understanding Alzheimer's & Dementia)
- [Alzheimer's Navigator](#)

For more information about the various stages of dementia and local resources:

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What Individual May Be Experiencing

How to Advise

Resources to Share

- Care partners need to also start being mindful about their own well-being and how the help they are providing to the person with dementia may be impacting their overall health.

Recommended activities for persons living with dementia and care partners:

- In-Person Care Consultation for next step planning after a diagnosis
- Education Programs: Living with Alzheimer's-Early Stage, Living Well with Chronic Conditions
- Early Stage Support Groups
- Social Engagement Activities: Memory Café's, Amazing Grace Chorus, Spark! Programs, Memories in the Making Community Events, Purple Canoe Club Events
- Counseling Services (as needed)

Additional recommended activities for persons living with dementia:

- Brain Health Enhancement Classes
- Silver Sneakers or other exercise programs

Additional recommended activity for care partners:

- Education Program: Understanding Dementia (3-part series, only offered locally not online)

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Middle-Stage Dementia (moderate)

A tool for care prescribers, case workers and health care professionals



What Individual May Be Experiencing

- The middle stages of dementia are typically the longest and can last for many years. As dementia progresses, the person living with the disease will require a greater level of care.
- Damage to the brain can make it difficult to express thoughts and perform routine tasks. The person with dementia may jumble words, have trouble dressing, get frustrated or angry, or act in unexpected ways, such as refusing to bathe.
- As relationships with the person with dementia change, new ways to connect and deepened bonds are often formed.
- Caregiving in this stage requires flexibility and patience. As the abilities of the person with dementia change and functioning independently becomes more difficult, greater responsibility is placed on the caregiver. Daily routines need to be adapted and structure becomes more important.
- Middle-Stage Concerns:
 - Changes in behavior
 - Changes in communication
 - Changes in daily care needs
 - Difficulty connecting to activities that provide meaning
 - Inability to safely drive
 - Increased safety concerns when left alone (home safety/wandering)

How to Advise

- Learn strategies and ways of coping that work for both the caregiver and person living with dementia
- Connect with other caregivers.
- Create a daily routine for the person living with dementia.
- Focus more intently on caregiver health concerns.
- Take advantage of respite programs (adult day centers, in-home care) and learn about funding options.
- Secure assistance with complex care needs/long distance caregiving (care management services).
- Transition to alternative living options (move in with family, residential care placement, 24 hour in-home care).
- Assistance with transitions to residential care settings (care management services, placement agencies).
- Meet with the local ADRC to go over long term care options, care planning and possible funding sources
- Connect with the Alzheimer's Association for assistance with care plan development.

Resources to Share

Online Resources for Care Partners:

- [Middle stage caregiving](#)
- [Alzheimer's Glossary](#)
- [Behaviors](#)
 - [Anger and Aggression](#)
 - [Anxiety and Agitation](#)
 - [Depression](#)
 - [Hallucinations](#)
 - [Memory Loss and Confusion](#)
 - [Repetition](#)
 - [Sleep Issue and Sundowning](#)
 - [Suspicious and delusions](#)
 - [Wandering](#)
- [Daily care](#)
 - [Daily care plan](#)
 - [Activities](#)
 - [Communication](#)
 - [Food and eating](#)
 - [Art and music](#)
 - [Incontinence](#)
 - [Bathing](#)
 - [Dressing and Grooming](#)
 - [Dental Care](#)
 - [Daily treatments](#)
 - [Working with the Doctor](#)
 - [Medication Safety](#)
 - [Clinical Trials](#)

For more information about the various stages of dementia and local resources:

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Middle-Stage Dementia (moderate)

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What Individual May Be Experiencing

How to Advise

Resources to Share

- **Care Options**
 - Adult Day Centers
 - In-home Care
 - Long-term Care
 - Respite Care
 - Hospice Care
 - Choosing Care Providers
 - Changing Care Providers
 - Working with Care Providers
 - Creating your Care Team
 - Long-distance Caregiving
- **Online Tools:**
 - ALZ Navigator
 - ALZ Connected
 - Community Resource Finder
 - Training Center
 - TrialMatch and Clinical Trials
 - Virtual Library
- **Caregiver Health**
 - Be a healthy caregiver
 - Caregiver Stress
 - Caregiver Stress Check
 - Caregiver Depression
 - Changes to Your Relationship
 - Grief and loss as Alzheimer's Progresses

For more information about the various stages of dementia and local resources:

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Middle-Stage Dementia (moderate)

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What Individual May Be Experiencing

How to Advise

Resources to Share

Recommended activities for persons living with dementia and care partners:

- In-Person Care Consultation for assistance with problem solving behaviors, care plan development, and navigating long term care options and funding.
- Education Programs Available In-Person and Online: Living with Alzheimer's-Moderate Stage, Effective Communication Strategies, Understanding Dementia Related Behaviors
- Education Programs Available In-Person Only: Understanding Dementia for Family Caregivers (3 part series), Savvy Caregiver (evidence-based 6 part series), Wisconsin State Conference on Alzheimer's Disease (3 day conference, scholarships available)
- Support Groups
- Social Engagement Activities: Memory Café's, Amazing Grace Chorus, Spark! Programs, Memories in the Making Community Events, Purple Canoe Club Events
- Counseling Services (as needed)

Things to consider attending:

- Alzheimer's State Advocacy Day
- Federal Forum (scholarships available)

For more information about the various stages of dementia and local resources:

Alzheimer's Association

www.alz.org/wi

24/7 Helpline 800.272.3900

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Late-Stage Dementia (severe)

A tool for care prescribers, case workers and health care professionals



What Individual May Be Experiencing

- The late stage of dementia may last from several weeks to several years. As the disease progresses, intensive, around-the-clock care is usually required.
- Late-stage decisions can be some of the hardest families face. As the disease advances, the needs of the person living with dementia will change and deepen.
- A person with late-stage dementia usually:
 - Has difficulty eating and swallowing
 - Needs assistance walking and eventually is unable to walk
 - Needs full-time help with all activities of daily living
 - Is vulnerable to infections, especially pneumonia.
- Increased attention needs to be given to the following:
 - Food and fluids
 - Bowel and bladder function
 - Skin and body health
 - Infections and pneumonia
 - Pain and illness

How to Advise

- During the late stages, the caregiver's role focuses on preserving quality of life and dignity. Continue to connect with the person living with dementia throughout the late stages of this disease, especially with experiences that engage a person's senses (touch, sound, sight, taste and smell).
- Contact the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)
- Continued awareness of caregiver health concerns.
- Caregiver training on lifting, transfers and falls prevention of the person living with dementia.
- Utilize palliative care and hospice care services.
- Bring additional help into the home to meet increased care needs.
- Care needs may exceed what a caregiver is able to provide at home, even with additional assistance. Help with transitioning to alternative placement may be needed.

Resources to Share

Alzheimer's Association Online Resources

- Daily Care
 - Food and Eating
 - Incontinence
 - Bathing
 - Dental Care
 -
- Care Options
 - In-home Care
 - Hospice Care
 - Long-term Care
 - Long Distance Caregiving
 -
- Caregiver Health
 - Be a Healthy Caregiver
 - Caregiver Stress
 - Caregiver Depression
 - Grief and Loss as Alzheimer's Progresses
- I Have Alzheimer's
 - End of life planning

Online Care and Support Services:

- ALZ Navigator
- Community Resource Finder
- ALZ Connected

For more information about the various stages of dementia and local resources:

Alzheimer's Association

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Late-Stage Dementia (severe)

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What Individual May Be Experiencing

How to Advise

Resources to Share

Additional Online Resources for Caregivers:

- [Family Caregiver Alliance](#)
 - [Alzheimer's disease and Caregiving](#)
 - [Palliative/Supportive Care](#)
 - [Advanced Illness](#)
 - [Dementia and Pain Management](#)
- [CDC - Alzheimer's Care](#)
- [This Caring Home - Dementia care](#)
- [National Institute on Aging](#)
- [Falls Prevention](#)
- [Caregiver Training Videos](#)
- [CaringInfo](#)
- [AARP - Pressure Ulcers](#)
- [Skin Care Tips](#)
- [Skin Picking](#)
- [Sepsis Alliance](#)

Education Opportunities

- [Living with Alzheimer's](#)
- [Effective Communications](#)
- [Understanding and Responding to Dementia-Related Behavior](#)

Care and Support Services locally:

- Care Consultation Services
- Support Groups
- Education Programs
- 24/7 Helpline - 800.272.3900

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