

# Alzheimer's Disease: Risk, Identification, and Treatment

As we grow older, our memories grow weaker. Everyone knows the feeling of walking into a room and forgetting what they were going to do there. But is this a sign of a momentary lapse or the start of a serious disease? Learn more about your risk for developing Alzheimer's disease, as well as how to identify it and how it can be treated.

## Risk Factors

Old age is the largest risk factor when it comes to Alzheimer's Disease. Your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease doubles approximately every 5 years after the age of 65. Family history and genetics are also risk factors for developing the disease, and your risk increases if more than one of your family members has had the disease. In addition, general health contributes to your risk of getting Alzheimer's. People who do not exercise or are overweight, have an unhealthy heart, abuse drugs or alcohol, or do not stimulate their mind have a higher risk of developing it.

## Identification

There are several tests that need to be administered by your doctor to determine if you have, or are developing, Alzheimer's Disease. A relatively new test called the Test Your Memory (TYM) test is a simple cognitive test that takes only 5 minutes to administer. It was developed by researchers from the Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge, England, and during a clinical trial, it was able to identify 93% of 679 people with Alzheimer's. It tests a wide range of cognitive abilities and is able to identify even mild cases of the disease. For a copy of the TYM test, [click here](#). Please note that this specific test is for people of British descent. Therefore, it contains one or two culture-based questions. The test can be modified, however, for people of other origins.

Some doctors use the Mini-Mental State Exam to assess mental function. This is a similar examination that tests several cognitive functions. Your doctor may also give you a physical or neurological examination or ask you about your family history. The earlier that Alzheimer's Disease can be identified, the better chance one has to prevent further memory loss, so if you or a family member is becoming increasingly forgetful or confused, make an appointment with your physician.

## Treatment

While there is no cure for Alzheimer's Disease, there are several different ways to prolong its development. Your doctor may prescribe prescription drugs to prevent further memory loss. Cholinesterase inhibitors and memantine are the two main types of drug that are prescribed. They work with the brain chemicals to promote memory. Doctors may also prescribe vitamin E supplements, as they are believed to protect nerve cells. There are a number of herbal remedies to treat the disease, as well, but the effectiveness and safety of these remedies are unknown. Physicians sometimes also prescribe anti-depressants or anti-psychotic medications to eliminate behavioral issues.

For more comprehensive information about Alzheimer's Disease, visit [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)