

Alzheimer's Disease Awareness



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Neenah Joint School District Health & Wellness Center

Mon. 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Tues. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Wed. 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Thurs. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Fri. 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.

World Alzheimer's Day is September 21st, and September is World Alzheimer's Month. Alzheimer's disease is a brain disorder with slow progression of difficulty with memory and thinking skills, eventually causing difficulty or inability to perform even the simplest tasks. Most cases of Alzheimer's will onset later in life (after age 65), and are caused by abnormal buildups of proteins that form plaques and tangles that affect neurons' abilities to function and communicate with other neurons. Brain tissue literally shrinks as this process progresses, but there can be changes in the brain up to a decade before symptoms are noted.

Most cases of Alzheimer's will first manifest as memory problems, but may also include word-finding difficulties, impaired reasoning or judgment, and difficulties with vision or spatial awareness. While it is common for all of us to have difficulty remembering the name of a person we haven't seen for a while, or to occasionally misplace our car keys, a person with Alzheimer's will progress to have difficulties completing normal tasks such as getting dressed, handling money or paying bills, or may wander or get lost, or have unexpected changes in their personality or behavior. These types of symptoms, when noticed by a family member or loved one, are often the reason a person seeks medical care and gets a diagnosis of Alzheimer's.

The most common forms of Alzheimer's (diagnosed aged 65 or older) are probably caused by a complex mix of genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors. (When diagnosed at a very young age, this is almost always the result of a genetic mutation.)

A nutritious diet, physical activity, social engagement, and mentally stimulating pursuits have all been associated with helping people stay healthy as they age. Each of these lifestyle choices may directly affect a person's risk of developing Alzheimer's, or may serve to avoid other conditions that can make Alzheimer's more likely (heart disease, stroke, diabetes, etc).

We continue to learn more about Alzheimer's, and this includes advances in treatment options. Treatment is most effective when begun early in the disease process, so if you are noticing concerning symptoms in yourself or a loved one, medical evaluation is recommended.