

Comparison of Behaviors Associated with Normal Aging and Early Alzheimer's Disease

Category	Normal Aging (occasional symptoms)	Early signs and symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease (lapses become more frequent)
Memory	Minor lapses and recalls later. Forgetting appointments or names and remembering them later. Recall is slightly slower.	Memory loss, especially recently learned information; important dates forgotten; repetitive questioning for the same answer in a short time frame; need to rely on memory aids for tasks they used to do themselves.
Planning or problem-solving	Develops a plan; follows recipes; occasional error when balancing a checkbook, later corrected.	Difficulty developing a plan. Difficulty following a plan or using a familiar recipe. Difficulty working with numbers or paying bills. Difficulty focusing on a project.
Familiar task completion	Occasionally needs help recording a television show.	Trouble using appliances. Trouble driving to a familiar location. Trouble remembering rules of a favorite game. Trouble managing a budget.
Recognition of time or place	Occasionally confused about day or week but remembers later.	Forget where they are or how they got there. Lose track of seasons, dates, or time. Trouble processing future events. Difficulty remembering the correct timeline of events.
Comprehension of visual images and spatial relationships	Vision changes related to cataracts, myopia, reduced acuity, driving at night, and glare.	Difficulty reading, determining color or contrast, judging distance. May become disoriented. Driving becomes more difficult due to reduced ability to estimate distance and speed.
Recall of words during talking and writing	Occasional trouble finding a word or phrase.	Difficulty joining and/or following a conversation. Struggles with vocabulary. May describe an item instead of naming it. Forgetting meanings of words.
Ability to retrace steps	Able to retrace steps after misplacing an item.	Frequently misplacing personal items; leaving things in unusual places and being unable to retrace steps.
Judgment	An occasional bad decision.	Decline in sound judgment, including with finances, personal interactions, and behavior. More vulnerable to scams or unusual decision-making.

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Work or social activities	Usually enjoys family and social events but sometimes needs a break.	May avoid social interactions, hobbies, projects, sports, or activities due to noticeable changes or forgetting how to complete tasks.
Mood and personality	Prefers routines.	May become anxious, depressed, less motivated, fearful, suspicious, easily upset, or frustrated.

Footer:

Modification of "10 Early Signs and Symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease" from Alzheimer's Association and Schott