



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

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**ANNUAL HOLIDAY GATHERINGS MAY REVEAL
WARNING SIGNS OF ALZHEIMER'S**
Early Detection Enables Families to Plan for the Future

(Cedar Rapids, IA) December 30, 2009– The holidays offer busy and often remote families an opportunity to gather and spend time with loved ones who they may only see occasionally during the year. While visiting, family members might notice changes in a relative that raise questions about their health. In fact, the number of people who express concern about a loved one's health tends to increase after the holiday season. From December 2008 to January 2009, the Alzheimer's Association toll-free helpline, 877-IS IT ALZ (877-474-8259), reported a 25 percent increase in calls from families with questions and concerns about Alzheimer's.

Alzheimer's Association helpline experts assist callers who often, especially at this time of year, have questions about warning signs and finding a medical professional and/or resources available to help people touched by Alzheimer's.

"It's important to seek guidance and support as soon as possible if you notice cognitive changes that disrupt daily life in yourself or someone else," said Kelly Hauer, Executive Director Alzheimer's Association East Central Iowa Chapter. "Early detection of Alzheimer's disease gives people with Alzheimer's the opportunity to plan for their future and take advantage of the resources that are currently available to them."

Benefits of an early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease

- Benefit from treatments that may improve symptoms and help maintain a level of independence longer
- Have more time to plan for the future
- Increase chances of participating in clinical drug trials, helping advance research
- Participate in decisions about their care, transportation, living options, financial and legal matters
- Develop a relationship with doctors and care partners
- Benefit from care and support services, making it easier for them and their family to manage the disease

Alzheimer's Association 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's

Everyone forgets a name or misplaces their keys occasionally. Many healthy people are less able to remember certain kinds of information as they get older. Memory loss that disrupts daily life is not a typical part of aging. It may be a symptom of Alzheimer's, a fatal brain disease that causes a slow decline in memory, thinking and reasoning skills. Every individual may experience one or more of these signs in different degrees. If you notice any of them, please see a doctor.

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 typical: Sometimes forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later.

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 typical: Making occasional errors when balancing a checkbook.

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 typical: Occasionally needing help to use the settings on a microwave or to record a television show.

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 typical: Getting confused about the day of the week but figuring it out later.

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 typical: Vision changes related to cataracts.

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 typical: Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.

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 typical: Misplacing things from time to time, such as a pair of glasses or the remote control.

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 typical: Making a bad decision once in a while.

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 typical: Sometimes feeling weary of work, family and social obligations.

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 typical: Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.

If you recognize any warning signs in yourself or someone else, the Alzheimer's Association recommends consulting a doctor immediately. Early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or other dementias is an important step to getting appropriate treatment, care and support services. To find out more information on the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease, visit the Alzheimer's Association at www.alz.org/10signs.

About the Alzheimer's Association:

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's. For more information, visit www.alz.org.

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