



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

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**ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION MINNESOTA-NORTH DAKOTA HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY DIAGNOSIS DURING NOVEMBER ALZHEIMER'S AWARENESS MONTH**

*Holiday Time with Family Offers Opportunity to Talk about Alzheimer's*

**Minneapolis, November 1, 2010** – November is Alzheimer's Awareness Month and also a time when families gather for holiday meals and celebrations. These holiday gatherings are often when family members first notice the [early signs of Alzheimer's](#).

A new study from the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis reports that family members and friends may be better judges of early Alzheimer's disease than standard memory tests. Questions that close friends and family may ask about their loved one during the holidays which could help identify early memory loss include:

- Are they making bad financial choices or having problems in judgment?
- Do they have less interest in hobbies?
- Are they repeating questions, stories or statements?
- Do they have trouble learning how to use a tool or appliance?
- Are they forgetting the month or year?
- Do they have difficulty handling complicated financial affairs, such as balancing a checkbook?
- Do they have difficulty remembering appointments?
- Do they have consistent problems with thinking and memory?

It is important for family members to know how to recognize the signs of [early stage memory loss and Alzheimer's disease](#) and to take action. When a loved one is showing signs of memory

loss and dementia that disrupt everyday life, it is critical to discuss the possibility of Alzheimer's. [The Alzheimer's Association](#) has identified the 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's to help guide families as they discuss the potential need to see a doctor, who can provide an early diagnosis and access to medical treatments, support services, and better care.

The 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's:

- 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

Individuals may experience one or more of these signs in different degrees. If any of these signs are present, it is important to see a doctor, who can help distinguish the early symptoms of Alzheimer's from normal age-related changes.

While it may be difficult to talk about Alzheimer's at a family gathering, the benefits of early detection can impact the whole family. With early detection, the person impacted can get the maximum benefit from available treatments and help maintain a level of independence longer. Early detection also allows the people impacted to have more time to build a care team and social support network to plan for the future and make decisions about care, transportation, living options, financial and legal matters. As soon as Alzheimer's is detected, people can utilize the care and support services that are available to make it easier for the whole family to live the best life possible with Alzheimer's.

“Understanding the early warning signs of Alzheimer's is critical to making good decisions about aging family members,” said Mary Birchard, Executive Director of the Alzheimer's Association Minnesota-North Dakota. “Holiday gatherings are a good time to assess the warning signs and to take action if Alzheimer's is suspected. Early detection, diagnosis and intervention are vital because they provide individuals the best opportunities for treatment, support and planning for their future.”

For more information on the Washington University Study, the 10 Warning Signs or to learn about activities and resources in your area, please visit the [Alzheimer's Association Minnesota-North Dakota chapter website](#).

### **About the Alzheimer's Association**

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading U.S. voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Its 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. The Association's vision is a world

without Alzheimer's disease. For more information, visit the [official Alzheimer's Association website](#).

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