



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

EMBARGOED UNTIL JANUARY 2009

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**LOVED ONES NOTICE TELL-TALE SIGNS OF
ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE DURING THE HOLIDAYS**
Early Detection Enables Families to Plan for the Future

(CHICAGO) January 6, 2009 – The holidays offer a rare opportunity for busy families to gather. Occasionally, family members notice subtle changes in loved ones that lead to health concerns and questions. Last holiday season, the Alzheimer's Association toll-free helpline (800.272.3900) reported a 31 percent increase in calls.

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 critical for family members to follow up with someone if they noticed subtle changes in family members," said Peter Reed, senior director of programs for the Alzheimer's Association. "Early detection of Alzheimer's disease gives people the opportunity to plan for their future and take advantage of the resources that are currently available to them such as the Alzheimer's Association 24/7 helpline."

An early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease allows you to:

- Benefit from treatments that may improve symptoms and help maintain a level of independence longer
- Have more time to plan for the future
- Increase their 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

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. The symptoms of Alzheimer's disease are much more severe than simple memory lapses. People with Alzheimer's experience difficulties communicating, thinking, reasoning and learning – problems severe enough to have an impact on an individual's work, social activities and family life.

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Memory loss. Forgetting recently learned information is one of the most common early signs of dementia. A person begins to forget more often and is unable to recall the information later.

What's normal: Forgetting names or appointments occasionally.

Difficulty performing familiar tasks. People with dementia often find it hard to plan or complete everyday tasks. Individuals may lose track of the steps involved in preparing a meal, placing a telephone call or playing a game.

What's normal: Occasionally forgetting why you came into a room or what you planned to say.

Problems with language. People with Alzheimer's disease often forget simple words or substitute unusual words, making their speech or writing hard to understand. For example, they may be unable to find the toothbrush and instead ask for "that thing for my mouth."

What's normal: Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.

Disorientation to time and place. People with Alzheimer's disease can become lost in their own neighborhood, forget where they are and how they got there, and not know how to get back home.

What's normal: Forgetting the day of the week or walking into another room and forgetting why you went there.

Poor or decreased judgment. Those with Alzheimer's may dress inappropriately, wearing several layers on a warm day or little clothing in the cold. They may show poor judgment, like giving away large sums of money.

What's normal: Making a questionable or debatable decision from time to time.

Problems with abstract thinking. Someone with Alzheimer's disease may have unusual difficulty performing complex mental tasks, like forgetting what numbers are for and how they should be used.

What's normal: Finding it challenging to balance a checkbook.

Misplacing things. A person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in unusual places such as an iron in the freezer or wristwatch in the sugar bowl.

What's normal: Misplacing keys or a wallet temporarily.

Changes in mood or behavior. Someone with Alzheimer's disease may show rapid mood swings – from calm to tears to anger – for no apparent reason.

What's normal: Occasionally feeling sad or moody.

Changes in personality. The personalities of people with dementia can change dramatically. They may become extremely confused, suspicious, fearful or dependant on a family member.

What's normal: People's personalities do change somewhat with age. They may become less flexible or reluctant to try new things; however, normal changes are not generally dramatic.

Loss of initiative. A person with Alzheimer's may become very passive, sitting in front of the TV for hours, sleeping more than usual or not wanting to do usual activities.

What's normal: Sometimes feeling weary of work or social obligations.

If you recognize any warning signs in yourself or a loved one, the Alzheimer's Association recommends consulting a doctor. Early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or other disorders causing dementia is an important step to getting appropriate treatment, care and support services. To find out more information on signs and symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, call 800.272.3900.

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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