



## **Is There a Difference Between Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia?**

Dementia is loss of mental function in two or more areas such as language, memory, visual and spatial abilities or judgment severe enough to interfere with daily life. Dementia itself is not a disease but a broader set of symptoms that accompany certain diseases or physical conditions. Well-known diseases that are considered dementia include Alzheimer's disease, multi-infarct dementia, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease and Lewy Body dementia.

Other physical conditions may cause or mimic dementia, such as depression, brain tumors, head injuries, nutritional deficiencies, hydrocephalus, infections (AIDS, meningitis, urinary tract infections), drug reactions and thyroid problems. Some of these conditions may be reversible with medical intervention. Individuals experiencing dementia-like symptoms should undergo diagnostic testing as soon as possible. An early and accurate diagnosis helps to identify reversible conditions. In addition, it gives individuals a greater chance of benefiting from existing treatments and allows them and their families more time to plan for the future.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, affecting as many as four million Americans. It is a degenerative disease that attacks the brain, beginning gradually and progressing at a variable rate. Alzheimer's disease results in impaired memory, thinking and behavior and can last from three to 20 years from the time of onset symptoms.

Scientists are still not certain what causes the disease. Age and family history with Alzheimer's disease are identifiable risk factors for the disease. Scientists are exploring the role of genetics in the development of Alzheimer's focusing on the rare forms of the disease that strike people in their 30s and 40s. Many researchers and physicians believe that Alzheimer's is a complex disease, probably caused by a variety of influences. The evidence is not clear if Alzheimer's disease runs in families.

There are two distinct types of Alzheimer's disease:

- Familial, a strong genetic link occurs when a person between the ages of 30-40 is diagnosed with Alzheimer's.
- Sporadic, not thought to be genetically linked when a person in the late 60s or 70s is diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

Much more common is the situation where a single-family member is diagnosed as having probable Alzheimer's disease (meaning that physicians are 80-90 percent certain that it is Alzheimer's).

For more information about Alzheimer's disease, please contact us at: 317-218-5111 or visit us on the web at [www.AlzCareGroup.com](http://www.AlzCareGroup.com)