



Having a senior moment?

The feelings only last a second, but they're still terrifying. "Why did I come into this room?"

"What was her name again?" And of course, "Where did I leave my car keys?"

As a nation of baby boomers ages, the collective number of "senior moments" inevitably rises, but experts agree that although an occasional memory lapse is natural for everyone, growing old and growing senile do not have to go together.

Just because you forgot your keys does not mean you have Alzheimer's. Famous figures such as former president Ronald Reagan brought it to the public light, and the threat of Alzheimer's disease looms behind many memory-related queries. Many experts say there's more to the disease than just memory loss. Language, spatial and visual capabilities have to be affected for the diagnosis to be true memory loss; otherwise,



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a person might just have what is known as a mild cognitive impairment.

In fact, even though great strides have been made in the research of the brain, diagnosing it still is tricky. Just as there is no one test to see if you have it, there's no one factor that's going to be preventive. Breakthroughs are being made every day, and it is just a matter of time until a cure will be developed.

The Alzheimer's Association was formed 25 years ago.

The advances that have been made on this debilitating disease have been nothing short of spectacular, but to date there is still no cure.

Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging. It is a devastating disorder of the brain's nerve cells that impairs memory,

thinking and behavior and leads, ultimately, to death. The impact of Alzheimer's on individuals, families and our health care system makes the disease one of our nation's greatest medical, social and economic challenges.

As our population ages, you

need to know how to look for the warning signs. There are 10 warning signs that you or your loved one may be exhibiting some early form of dementia or Alzheimer's:

- Memory loss
- Difficulty performing familiar tasks
- Problems with language
- Disorientation to time and place
- Poor or decreased judgment
- Problems with abstract thinking
- Misplacing things
- Changes in mood or behavior
- Changes in personality
- Loss of initiative

If you have a loved one or know someone exhibiting some of these warning signs, contact a physician who can address your concerns. For more information, call the local Alzheimer's Association office, 602-528-0545.

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Alzheimer's statistics

- An estimated 4.5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease, and the number has more than doubled since 1980.
- The number of Americans with Alzheimer's disease will continue to grow. By 2050 the number of individuals with Alzheimer's could range from 11.3 million to 16 million.
- In a Gallup poll commissioned by the Alzheimer's Association, 1 in 10 Americans said that they had a family member with Alzheimer's and 1 in 3 knew someone with the disease.
- Increasing age is the greatest risk factor for Alzheimer's. One in 10 individuals over 65 and nearly half of those over 85 are affected. Rare, inherited forms of Alzheimer's disease can strike individuals as early as their 30s and 40s.
- A person with Alzheimer's disease will live an average of eight years and as many as 20 years or more from the onset of symptoms as estimated by relatives. From the time of diagnosis, people with Alzheimer's disease survive about half as long as those of similar age without dementia.
- National direct and indirect annual costs of caring for individuals with Alzheimer's disease are at least \$100 billion, according to estimates used by the Alzheimer's Association and the National Institute on Aging.
- Alzheimer's disease costs American business \$61 billion a year, according to a report commissioned by the Alzheimer's Association. Of that figure, \$24.6 billion covers Alzheimer health care and \$36.5 billion covers costs related to caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's, including lost productivity, absenteeism and worker replacement.
- More than 7 out of 10 people with Alzheimer's disease live at home, where almost 75 percent of their care is provided by family and friends. The remainder is "paid" care costing an average of \$19,000 per year. Families pay almost all of that out-of-pocket.
- Half of all nursing home residents have Alzheimer's disease or a related disorder.
- The average cost for nursing home care is \$42,000 per year but can exceed \$70,000 per year in some areas of the country.
- The average lifetime cost of care for an individual with Alzheimer's is \$174,000.
- According to a report commissioned by the Alzheimer's Association, Medicare costs for beneficiaries with Alzheimer's are expected to increase 75 percent, from \$91 billion in 2005 to \$160 billion in 2010.
- The federal government estimates spending approximately \$647 million for Alzheimer's disease research in fiscal year 2005.