

What is the age of most people suffered with Alzheimer's disease

Bruno Dubois

Institute of Memory and Alzheimer's Disease (IM2A) and Brain and Spine Institute, Paris 06, Paris, France

Correspondence to: Bruno Dubois, Department of Neurology, Pierre et Marie Curie University, Paris 06, Paris, France Tel: 133-1-42-16-75-02; E- mail: bruno.dubois@aphp.fr

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Editorial Note

An estimated 6.2 million Americans of all ages are living with Alzheimer's disease in 2021. Alzheimer's disease is a neurodegenerative disease that usually starts slowly and progressively worsens. It is the cause of 60–70% of cases of dementia. The most common early symptom is difficulty in remembering recent events. As the disease advances, symptoms can include problems with language, disorientation (including easily getting lost), mood swings, loss of motivation, self-neglect, and behavioral issues. As a person's condition declines, they often withdraw from family and society. Gradually, bodily functions are lost, ultimately leading to death. Although the speed of progression can vary, the typical life expectancy following diagnosis is three to nine years.

The cause of Alzheimer's disease is poorly understood. There are many environmental and genetic risk factors associated with its development. The strongest genetic risk factor is from an allele of APOE. Other risk factors include a history of head injury, clinical depression, and high blood pressure. The disease process is largely associated with amyloid plaques, neurofibrillary tangles, and loss of neuronal connections in the brain. A probable diagnosis is based on the history of the illness and cognitive testing with medical imaging and blood tests to rule out other possible causes.

Initial symptoms are often mistaken for normal aging. Examination of brain tissue is needed for a definite diagnosis, but this can only take place after death. Good nutrition, physical

activity, and engaging socially are known to be of benefit generally in aging, and these may help in reducing the risk of cognitive decline and Alzheimer's; in 2019 clinical trials were underway to look at these possibilities. There are no medications or supplements that have been shown to decrease risk.

No treatments stop or reverse its progression, though some may temporarily improve symptoms. Affected people increasingly rely on others for assistance, often placing a burden on the caregiver. The pressures can include social, psychological, physical, and economic elements. Exercise programs may be beneficial with respect to activities of daily living and can potentially improve outcomes. Behavioral problems or psychosis due to dementia are often treated with antipsychotics, but this is not usually recommended, as there is little benefit and an increased risk of early death.

Medications may temporarily improve or slow progression of symptoms. These treatments can sometimes help people with Alzheimer's disease maximize function and maintain independence for a time. Different programs and services can help support people with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers.

There is no treatment that cures Alzheimer's disease or alters the disease process in the brain. In advanced stages of the disease, complications from severe loss of brain function — such as dehydration, malnutrition or infection — result in death.