



# The Basics

Understanding Alzheimer's disease

## How is Alzheimer's evaluated?

There is currently no test that determines if a person has Alzheimer's. Doctors use a variety of methods to make an evaluation. These include new brain imaging techniques that may help differentiate Alzheimer's from other forms of dementia.

Siemens has introduced a noninvasive imaging solution that can help doctors make an evaluation. Using the Biograph mCT PET•CT family of scanners for amyloid PET imaging, physicians can look for abnormal clusters of protein fragments in the brain called amyloid plaques. This means that for the first time in clinical practice, physicians can use PET imaging to visualize evidence of amyloid plaques when evaluating for Alzheimer's disease and other causes of cognitive decline.

Combined with other types of cognitive, physical, and imaging exams, these new technologies can help physicians to evaluate for Alzheimer's — and help patients and their loved ones to prepare for the best future possible.

## Additional Resources:

- [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)  
*The Alzheimer's Association*
- [www.usa.siemens.com/alzheimers](http://www.usa.siemens.com/alzheimers)  
*First Integrated Amyloid Imaging Solution*
- [www.nia.nih.gov](http://www.nia.nih.gov)  
*NIH National Institute on Aging*
- [www.alzfdn.org](http://www.alzfdn.org)  
*Alzheimer's Foundation of America*



What is Alzheimer's?  
What are the symptoms?  
Why is an evaluation important?





# Understanding Alzheimer's Disease

## An introduction

### What is Alzheimer's?

"Dementia" is a general term used to describe a decline in mental ability (for example, problems with memory, thinking, and behavior). Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia. In general it affects people aged 65 and over, but early-onset Alzheimer's occurs in a small percentage of people in their 40s and 50s.

While there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's, there are medications that may be available to help ease some of its symptoms. Today, researchers around the world continue to develop and test potential new treatments for this increasingly common disease.

### What are the symptoms?

As we get older, many of us experience some degree of forgetfulness or "senior moments." It's normal to wonder if this could indicate a more serious problem.

If you or a loved one are concerned about recent changes in memory or behavior, a visit to your physician is a good place to start.

The Alzheimer's Association lists these 10 warning signs of Alzheimer's Disease.<sup>1</sup>

1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life
2. Challenges in planning or problem-solving

3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure
4. Confusion with time or place
5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships
6. New problems with words in speaking or writing
7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
8. Decreased or poor judgment
9. Withdrawal from work or social activities
10. Changes in mood and personality

If you or a loved one has experienced one or more of these symptoms, it's important to see a physician. A complete medical evaluation is necessary to diagnose or rule out Alzheimer's disease.

### Why is an evaluation important?

The symptoms of non-Alzheimer's forms of dementia can potentially be treated and, in some cases, reversed.

If Alzheimer's is suspected, intervention and treatment may be available to help treat symptoms. Additionally, patients and families can:

- Investigate opportunities to enroll in clinical trials
- Explore available support services
- Plan for the future and have a voice in important matters, such as financial decisions and health care options

1. "10 Early Signs and Symptoms of Alzheimer's," The Alzheimer's Association, accessed July 2013, [http://www.alz.org/alzheimers\\_disease\\_10\\_signs\\_of\\_alzheimers.asp](http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_10_signs_of_alzheimers.asp).