

September is World Alzheimer's Month, an international campaign to raise dementia awareness and challenge stigma. This campaign was launched in 2012 by [Alzheimer's Disease International](#) (ADI) – it unites opinion leaders, people with dementia, their caregivers and family, medical professionals, researchers and the media from all around the world. World Alzheimer's Day is on 21 September each year. ADI is the international federation of Alzheimer associations around the world, in official relations with the [World Health Organization](#).

What is Alzheimer's Disease?

According to [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), although experts are learning more every day, right now, they still do not know what causes this disease. However, below is how this disease is defined:

- Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of *dementia*.
 - Dementia is a collective name for progressive brain syndromes that cause deterioration over time of a variety of different brain functions such as memory, thinking, recognition and language, planning and personality.
- A progressive disease beginning with mild memory loss possibly leading to loss of the ability to carry on a conversation and respond to the environment.
- Involves parts of the brain that control thought, memory and language.
- Can seriously affect a person's ability to carry out daily activities.

Alzheimer's by the Numbers

- It is one of the **top 10** leading causes of death in the United States.
- There are **over 50 million people** around the world living with dementia.
- The number of people living with dementia is predicted to triple, rising to 152 million by 2050 – making the disease **one of the most significant health and social crises of the 21st century**.

What are the Symptoms?

For most people, the first symptom of Alzheimer's disease is memory loss. Often the person who has a memory problem doesn't notice it, but family and friends do. But the person with the disease may also know that something is wrong. The symptoms of Alzheimer's get worse slowly over time. You may:

- Have trouble making decisions.
- Be confused about what time and day it is.
- Get lost in places you know well.
- Have trouble finding the right words to say what you want to say.
- Have trouble learning and remembering new information.
- Have trouble doing daily tasks like cooking a meal or paying bills.

Reducing the Risk of Alzheimer's

Research suggests that leading a healthy lifestyle may help to reduce a person's risk of developing dementia later in life. The general rule is what's good for the heart is good for the brain – therefore, we need to take care of both.

- **Look after your heart:** smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and obesity damage the blood vessels and increase the risks of having a stroke or a heart attack.
- **Be physically active:** exercise is a powerful preventive medicine, helping you control your blood pressure and weight, as well as reducing the risk of type II diabetes and some form of cancer.
- **Follow a healthy diet:** eat a healthy balanced diet filled with lots of fruits and vegetables, protein-rich foods and grains.

- **Enjoy social activities:** scheduled time to virtually connect with friends and family.
- **Challenge your brain:** by challenging your brain, you can learn some great new things and help build new brain neurons and strengthen connections between them.
- **Consult your doctor:** don't miss your annual physical exams. Regular screenings can help find problems before they start.

Additional Resources and Support

- [Alzheimer's Association](#)
- [Alzheimer's Foundation of America](#)
- [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [National Institute on Aging](#)
- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)

Office of Human Resources Management
Level Up – Employee Wellness Program
1400 McCormick Drive, Suite 245
Largo, MD 20774
LevelUp@co.pg.md.us

