

Symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease

Mild Alzheimer's Disease

- Forgetfulness, unable to learn new information¹
- Difficulty managing finances, planning meals, taking medication on schedule¹
- Depression symptoms¹
- Still able to do most activities, drive car¹
- Gets lost going to familiar places²

Moderate Alzheimer's Disease

- Forgetfulness extends to forgetting old facts (eg, past career, names of friends)²
 - Continually repeats stories²
 - Makes up stories to fill gaps²
- Difficulty performing tasks²
 - Following written notes
 - Using the shower and toilet
- Agitation, behavioral symptoms common¹
 - Restlessness, repetitive movements
 - Wandering
 - Paranoia, delusions, hallucinations
- Deficits in intellect and reasoning (eg, poor judgment, forgets manners)²
- Concern for appearance, hygiene, and sleep become more noticeable²

Severe Alzheimer's Disease

- May groan, scream, mumble, or speak gibberish²
- Behavioral symptoms common²
 - Refuses to eat
 - Inappropriately cries out
- Failure to recognize family or faces²
- Difficulty with all essential activities of daily living (ADLs)² (eg, eating, toileting, walking)

Functional Assessment Staging (FAST) and Global Deterioration Scale (GDS) Stages of Alzheimer's Disease^{3,4}

GDS Stage	FAST Stage	FAST Functional Assessment (measured by highest degree of disability)
1 No cognitive decline ³	1	No difficulty, either subjectively or objectively ⁴
2 Very mild cognitive decline <i>MCI</i> ³	2	Complains of forgetting location of objects; subjective work difficulties ⁴
3 Mild cognitive decline <i>MCI</i> ³	3	Decreased job functioning evident to coworkers; difficulty in traveling to new locations. Decreased organizational capacity ^{4*}
4 Moderate cognitive decline <i>mild AD</i> ³	4	Decreased ability to perform complex tasks (eg, planning dinner for guests, handling personal finances [such as forgetting to pay bills], grocery shopping, etc) ^{4*}
5 Moderately severe cognitive decline <i>moderate AD</i> ³	5	Requires assistance in choosing proper clothing to wear for the day, season, or occasion (eg, patient may wear the same clothing repeatedly, unless supervised) ^{4*}
6 Severe cognitive decline <i>moderate to severe AD</i> ^{3†}	6a	Improperly putting on clothes without assistance or prompting (eg, may put street clothes on over pajamas, or put shoes on wrong feet, or have difficulty buttoning clothing) occasionally or more frequently over the past weeks ^{4*}
	6b	Unable to bathe properly (eg, difficulty adjusting bath-water temperature) occasionally or more frequently over the past weeks ^{4*}
	6c	Inability to handle mechanics of toileting (eg, forgets to flush the toilet, does not wipe properly or properly dispose of toilet tissue) occasionally or more frequently over the past weeks ^{4*}
	6d	Urinary incontinence (occasionally or more frequently over the past weeks) ^{4*}
	6e	Fecal incontinence (occasionally or more frequently over the past weeks) ^{4*}
7 Very severe cognitive decline <i>severe AD</i> ^{3†}	7a	Ability to speak limited to approximately half a dozen intelligible different words, or fewer, in the course of an average day or in the course of an intensive interview ⁴
	7b	Speech ability limited to the use of a single intelligible word in an average day or in the course of an intensive interview (the person may repeat the word over and over) ⁴
	7c	Ambulatory ability lost (cannot walk without personal assistance) ⁴
	7d	Cannot sit up without assistance (eg, the individual will fall over if there are no lateral rests [arms] on the chair) ⁴
	7e	Loss of ability to smile ⁴
	7f	Loss of ability to hold up head independently ⁴

*Scored primarily on the basis of information obtained from a knowledgeable informant and/or caregiver.

†The GDS does not use substages for stages 6 and 7.

Note: Italicized text is a suggested correspondence to each GDS stage and is not part of the GDS instrument.

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DID YOU KNOW...

- Nearly 4.5 million people in the United States suffer from Alzheimer's disease⁵
- Approximately 2.6 million people in the United States have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease⁶
 - Of these, nearly 65% were initially diagnosed in the moderate to severe stages⁷
- 28% of patients with Alzheimer's disease are treated with an acetylcholinesterase inhibitor⁶
- The average annual nursing home expense for a patient with Alzheimer's disease is \$55,000⁸
- The average annual cost of Alzheimer's disease to society is \$100 billion⁹

References: 1. Cefalu C, Grossberg GT. *Diagnosis and Management of Dementia*. Loswood, Karc American Academy of Family Physicians; 2001 (monograph). 2. Gwyther LP. *Caring For People With Alzheimer's Disease: A Manual For Facility Staff*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC and Chicago, IL: American Health Care Association and the Alzheimer's Association; 2001. 3. Reisberg B, Ferris SH, de Leon MJ, Crook T. The Global Deterioration Scale for assessment of primary degenerative dementia. *Am J Psych*. 1982;139:1136-1139. 4. Reisberg B. Functional assessment staging (FAST). *Psychopharmacol Bull*. 1988;24:653-659. 5. Hobart LE, Scherr PA, Bienias JL, Bennett DA, Evans DA. Alzheimer disease in the US population: prevalence estimates using the 2000 census. *Arch Neurol*. 2003;60:1119-1122. 6. Data on file. Forest Laboratories, Inc. 7. The Treatment of Alzheimer's Disease, Study IX, Market Measures CoInt/NOP World, May 2003. 8. Insurance Broadcasting Web site. Statistics about nursing home costs. Available at: <http://www.insurance-portal.com/nhcosts.htm>. Accessed May 13, 2004. 9. Leon J, Cheng CK, Neumann PJ. Alzheimer's disease care: costs and potential savings. *Health Affairs (Millwood)*. 1998;17:206-215.

A Guide to the Symptoms and Stages of Alzheimer's Disease



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