



Understanding Alzheimer's Disease

Milicent Young, MD, FACP

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SHBP
State Health Benefit Plan
A Division of the Georgia Department of Community Health

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Objectives

- Define dementia and Alzheimer’s disease
- Recognize common causes and types of dementia
- Identify early signs and symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease
- Understand how Alzheimer’s disease is diagnosed and treated
- Explore the impact of Alzheimer’s disease on patients and families



What is Dementia?

Dementia is not a single disease.

It is a syndrome characterized by:

- Decline in memory and thinking.
- Difficulty performing everyday activities.
- Changes in judgement, language or behavior.
- Symptoms severe enough to interfere with independence.



Understanding Memory Loss and Dementia

Memory loss is a symptom. Dementia is a syndrome. Alzheimer's disease is one cause of dementia.

- Not all memory problems are dementia.
- Not all dementia is Alzheimer's disease.
- Some causes of memory problems are reversible.
- A medical evaluation is important to determine the cause.



Causes of Memory Loss and Dementia



Potentially Reversible causes

Medical	Vitamin B12 deficiency, liver or kidney disease, dehydration, hypothyroidism
Medication Related	Sleep medications, opioids
Behavioral Health	Depression, anxiety
Sleep Disorders	Sleep apnea, chronic sleep deprivation
Others	Infection, hearing or vision impairment

Common Types of Dementia



Alzheimer's Disease

- Most common
- Gradual onset
- Slowly progressive
- Memory loss is usually the first symptom

Vascular Dementia

- Caused by strokes, or chronic small vessel disease
- Associated with high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, high cholesterol, atrial fibrillation
- Frequently progresses in a stair step pattern
- Prevention focuses on controlling vascular risk factors

Lewy Body Dementia

- Visual hallucinations
- Fluctuating cognition
- Parkinsonian features

Frontotemporal Dementia

- Earlier onset
- Personality, behavior, or language changes occur before memory loss

Prevalence

- Approximately **7 million Americans age 65 and older** are living with Alzheimer's disease.
- Alzheimer's disease accounts for **60-80% of dementia cases**.
- The number of affected individuals is expected to nearly double over the next two decades.
- Age is the strongest risk factor, but dementia is **not** a normal part of aging.



Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures

Alzheimer’s Disease

- A progressive neurodegenerative disorder.
- The most common type of dementia.
- Symptoms develop gradually over years.
- Progressively interfere with daily functioning.



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Alzheimer's Disease Signs and Symptoms



Early Signs and Symptoms

- Recent memory loss
- Repeating questions
- Misplacing objects
- Difficulty finding words
- Missing appointments

Progressive Signs and Symptoms

- Difficulty managing finances
- Getting lost
- Poor judgment
- Personality changes
- Difficulty recognizing family
- Loss of independence

Early Evaluation Matters

Early evaluation helps determine

- Is this normal aging?
- Is there a reversible medical problem?

Early diagnosis allows:

- Treatment of reversible conditions.
- Better control of vascular risk factors.
- Earlier use of Alzheimer's therapies when appropriate.
- Safety planning.
- Advance care planning.



Diagnosis

Evaluations include:

- Medical history
- Family observations
- Physical exam
- Cognitive screening
- Labs (i.e. Vitamin B12, Thyroid function test, Complete Blood Count)
- MRI or CT of the brain



Tests Used During the Evaluation

Purpose of testing: To identify treatable conditions and support the diagnosis, not to diagnose Alzheimer's by one test alone.

- Lab test (Vitamin B12, thyroid function, complete blood count)
- Brain imaging (MRI, CT)
- Specialized testing (Amyloid PET imaging, cerebrospinal fluid biomarkers, blood biomarkers)



Protecting the heart protects the brain

- Blood pressure controlled
- Diabetes management
- Cholesterol controlled
- Smoking cessation
- Increase physical activity
- Healthy diet
- Adequate sleep



Treatment Options





Medications

- Donepezil, Rivastigmine, Galantamin, Memantine.

Disease Modifying Therapy

- For select patients with early Alzheimer's disease – Anti-amyloid monoclonal antibodies.

Lifestyle Measures

- Exercise/physical activity, blood pressure control, diabetes management, healthy diet, social engagement, cognitive activity, adequate sleep.

Living Safely with Alzheimer’s Disease

- Medication management
- Driving safety
- Fall prevention
- Wandering prevention
- Advance care planning
- Home safety



Impact on Families

Many caregivers balance careers while caring for aging parents or spouses.

Family members often experience:

- Emotional stress
- Caregiver burnout
- Depression and anxiety
- Financial burden
- Changing family roles
- Difficult decisions about driving and long-term care



What Families Can Do

Caring for the caregiver is an essential part of caring for the patient.

- Seek evaluation early
- Attend appointments together
- Learn about the disease
- Organize medications
- Encourage physical activity
- Plan ahead legally and financially
- Accept help
- Utilize caregiver support groups and community resources



Key Takeaways

- ✓ Dementia is a syndrome, not a disease.
- ✓ Not all memory loss is Alzheimer’s disease.
- ✓ Some causes of memory problems are treatable or reversible.
- ✓ Alzheimer’s disease is the most common type of dementia.
- ✓ Early diagnosis improves treatment options and planning.
- ✓ Families and caregivers are central members of the healthcare team.
- ✓ Compassion, patience and community support improve quality of life.

Anthem Resources

A team that delivers:

- Registered nurses who help guide you in managing your condition and refer you to other health experts, as needed.
- Respiratory therapists who can provide sleep apnea education, training for respiratory equipment, or assist with smoking cessation.
- Pharmacists who understand the medicines used to treat health conditions and their side effects.
- Social workers who can assist with community resources and support services.
- Registered dietitians who offer nutritional education and dietary expertise.
- Exercise physiologists who give expert help on setting fitness goals in line with your doctor's care plan.
- Behavioral health case managers who are licensed professionals who can offer confidential support, coordinate services of other healthcare providers and provide local and online resources

https://www.anthem.com/mcr/shbp/resources

Total Health, Total You

Total Health, Total You

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It helps to have someone by your side to help you achieve your health goals. Total Health, Total You offers a holistic clinical management approach to address all of your healthcare needs. It provides a team of nurses, health coaches, dietitians, pharmacists, exercise physiologists, behavioral health specialists, and other health experts.

A team that delivers

Registered nurses
who help guide you in managing your condition and refer you to other health experts, as needed.

Social workers
who can assist with community resources and support services.

Exercise physiologists
who give expert help on setting fitness goals in line with your doctor's care plan.

Respiratory therapists
who can provide sleep apnea education, training for respiratory equipment, or assist with smoking cessation.

Registered dietitians
who offer nutritional education and dietary expertise.

Health coaches
who can work with you to set health goals to improve the quality of your life.

Pharmacists
who understand the medicines used to treat health conditions and their side effects.



To learn more, call 866-901-0746, available from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET, Monday to Friday.

Help with managing chronic health conditions

If you or one of your covered dependents lives with a chronic health condition, Anthem's experienced nurses and coaches can help you manage symptoms to improve your quality of life. Anthem's health experts can help members with the following conditions:

- Asthma
- Low-back pain
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Certain types of cancer
- Heart failure (HF)
- Vascular or musculoskeletal diseases
- Coronary artery disease (CAD)

Case management

After surgery or a stay in the hospital, an Anthem nurse will contact you to review your doctor's care plan. Follow-up care, medication review, and personal lifestyle coaching are some of the services they can provide to members.

24/7 NurseLine

The registered nurses at Anthem's 24/7 NurseLine offer answers to your health questions, health-related educational materials and information about helpful tools/programs. They are available anytime of the day or night, including weekends, at 866-787-6361.

Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) Therapy

Anthem's health experts are available to provide telephonic support, education and resources, and provider outreach to those diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Behavioral Health

When experiencing stress or depression, our licensed health professionals can offer confidential support to alleviate your pain. They can also coordinate the services of your other healthcare providers and provide local and online resources.

Building Healthy Families

A program designed to support growing families with tools and resources, from family planning and pregnancy through the toddler years. The program includes:

- Tools to help you stay organized.
- Health and wellness expertise for you and your family.
- Personalized pregnancy support.

Building Healthy Families offers a personalized approach to care with digital tools, educational resources, care plans, messaging, and trackers.

Anthem SHBP Website

Includes a wide variety of information to help you on your journey to be your healthy best!

- Live Health Online
- 24/7 Nurse Line
- Preventive Care Coverage
- Building Healthy Families
- Prescription Drug Savings
- Goal Setting
- Healthy Checklist
- Education
- Mental Health Resources
- Health Videos and Webinars
- Incentive Program Information
- Tobacco Cessation
- Recipes
- Much More!

www.anthem.com/SHBP

Questions?



Appendix



References

Dementia Types | Symptoms, Diagnosis, Causes, Treatments | alz.org

Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures