HEALTH HERO

World Alzheimer's Day: Understanding and supporting loved ones

What is Alzheimer's?

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive brain disorder that affects memory, thinking skills, and the ability to perform simple tasks. It's the most common cause of dementia, affecting an estimated 850,000 people in the UK and over 50 million worldwide. Learn more at the Alzheimer's Society website.

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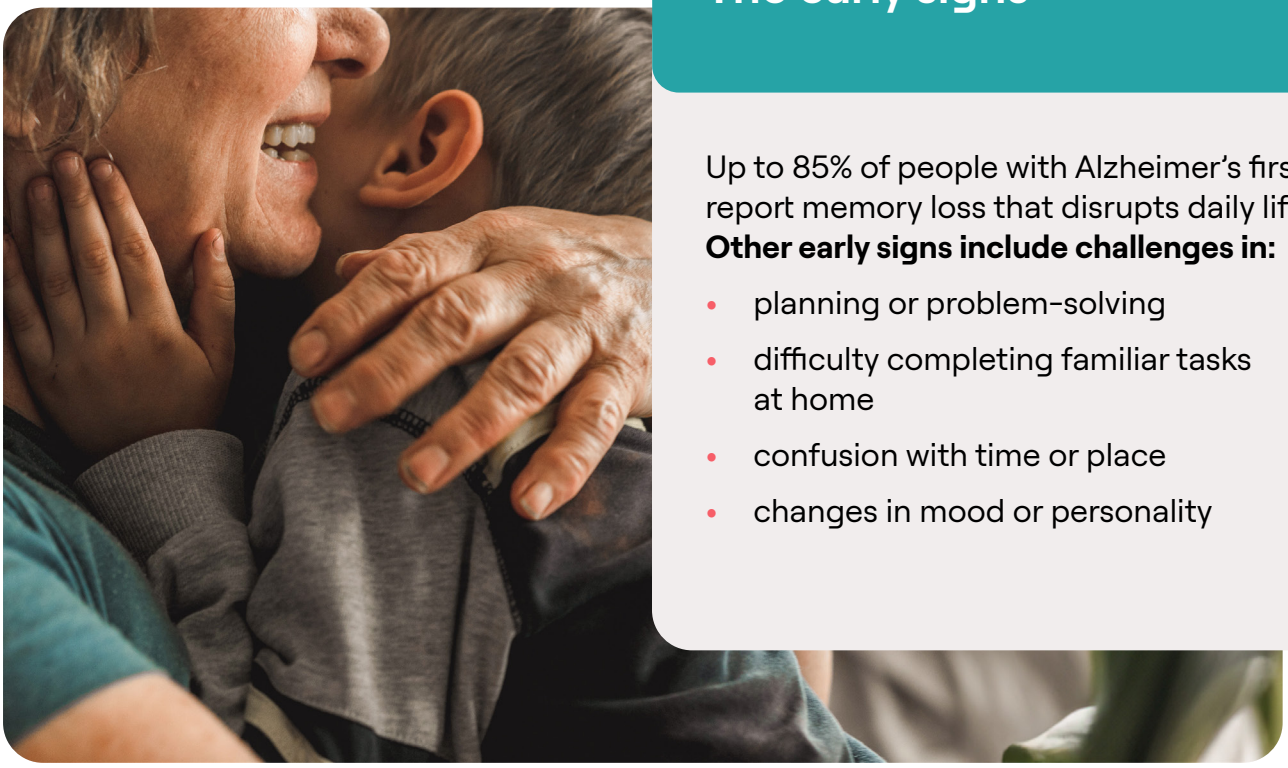

The early signs

Up to 85% of people with Alzheimer's first report memory loss that disrupts daily life. **Other early signs include challenges in:**

- planning or problem-solving
- difficulty completing familiar tasks at home
- confusion with time or place
- changes in mood or personality

Caring for someone with Alzheimer's

Caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's can be challenging. Here are some research-based tips:

- **Maintain routine:** Alzheimer's patients thrive on familiarity. Keeping a regular schedule can bring comfort and minimise confusion.
- **Clear communication:** Use simple words and sentences. Speak slowly, maintain eye contact, and be patient.
- **Safe environment:** A safe environment is crucial. Remove tripping hazards and install safety locks to prevent wandering.
- **Healthy lifestyle:** Encourage a diet high in fruits and vegetables, lean protein, and low-fat dairy. Regular exercise can also improve mood and health. Explore Alzheimer's Research UK's website for more details.

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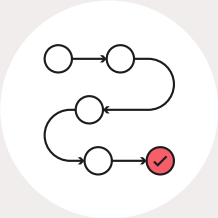
Adapting activities for people with Alzheimer's

Activities can be a source of joy and connection for people with Alzheimer's. The key is to adapt them to your loved one's capabilities:



Simplify tasks

Break down activities into manageable steps. Use visual and verbal cues to guide them through the process.

Engage the senses

Activities like listening to music, baking, or gardening can engage the senses and stimulate memories.

Involve them in daily chores

Simple tasks like folding laundry or setting the table can provide a sense of accomplishment and routine.

Reminisce

Looking through photo albums or watching home videos can spark conversation and connection. Visit the Alzheimer's Association for more activity ideas.

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How to communicate more effectively with someone with Alzheimer's

Effective communication can enhance the quality of life for a person with Alzheimer's:

- **Keep it simple:** Use simple, clear sentences. Speak slowly and distinctly.
- **Stay positive:** Use a gentle, reassuring tone. Body language and touch can also convey your message.
- **Avoid corrections:** If they remember things incorrectly, let it be. Correcting them can lead to frustration.
- **Non-verbal communication:** Sometimes, non-verbal cues like touch or eye contact can communicate more than words.
- **Patience is key:** Allow them plenty of time to respond. Be patient and supportive.
- **Distraction and redirection:** If they become upset, change the subject or the environment.

For more resources, visit Dementia UK's website.

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Coping as a caregiver

Approximately 700,000 people in the UK are dementia carers. Here's how to look after yourself too:

- **Self-care:** Make sure you're eating well, getting enough sleep, and taking time to relax and do things you enjoy.
- **Support groups:** Connecting with others who understand what you're going through can be incredibly helpful. Try local or online Alzheimer's support groups like the Dementia Talking Point.
- **Professional help:** Don't hesitate to seek help from professionals or respite care services when needed. Visit Carers UK for more information.

This World Alzheimer's Day, let's come together to support those living with Alzheimer's and the loved ones who care for them. For more guidance and support, contact HealthHero today.