

Understanding Alzheimer's Disease

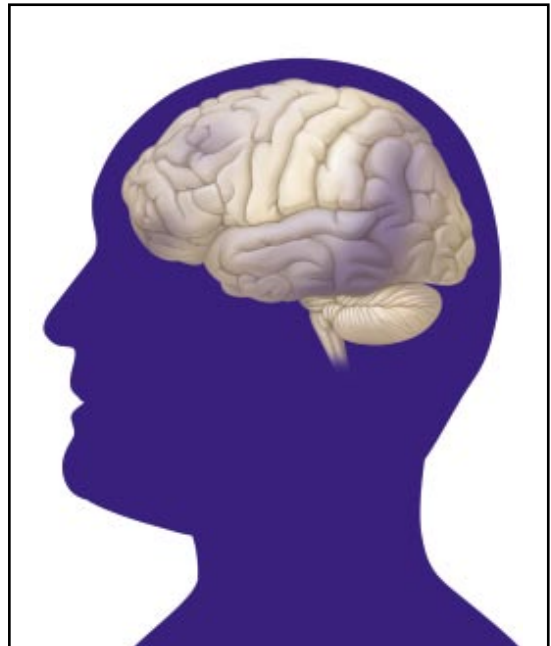
Learn all you can about Alzheimer's disease (AD). It's one of the best ways to help your loved one and yourself. Alzheimer's is a disease that damages the brain and causes loss of memory. This is why Alzheimer's patients have problems with day-to-day living. The cause of the disease is not yet fully understood. At present, there is no cure. But proper care can help most people with Alzheimer's disease live a comfortable life for many years.

How the Brain Works

The brain controls all the workings of the body and mind. Different areas of the brain control different functions. Certain areas control physical tasks such as walking. Other areas control language skills. Still others control mental tasks such as remembering, concentrating, and decision-making.

Changes in the Brain

In Alzheimer's patients, microscopic structures called **plaques** and **tangles** start to form. At the same time, brain cells begin to die. These changes, although they occur throughout the brain, happen mainly in those parts of the brain that are needed for memory, language, and reasoning. Other areas of the brain generally aren't affected until very late in the illness.



Some areas of the brain affected by Alzheimer's disease are shaded above. Areas that may be affected control memory, reasoning, language, judgment, attention, and other mental functions.