

The Effects of Alzheimer's Disease

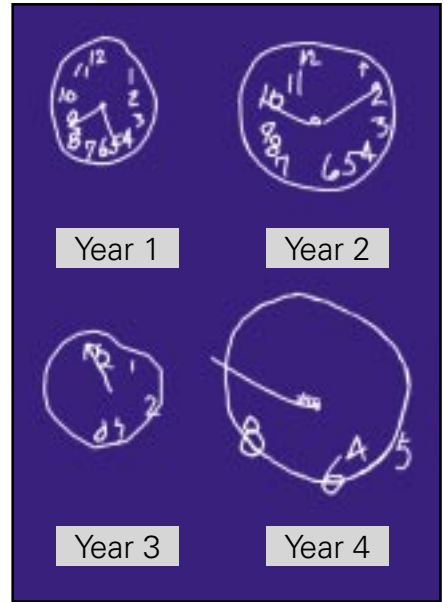
The symptoms of Alzheimer's disease appear slowly. The average length of time from the first through the last stage is between 3 and 20 years. This time can vary widely.

- **In the early stage**, patients seem confused and forgetful. Recent events and conversations are often completely forgotten. He or she may lose important items. However, the distant past may be remembered clearly. At this stage, they may deny that there is a problem.
- **In the middle stage**, more and more help is needed with daily tasks. Patients may not know family members, may get lost in familiar places, and may forget how to do simple tasks such as dressing and bathing. He or she may be restless, moody, and unpredictable.
- **In the late stage**, memory, judgment, and reason may be lost completely. Help with daily activities is generally needed.

Treating Alzheimer's Disease

The goals of treatment are to manage symptoms, maintain functioning for as long as possible, and keep your loved one comfortable.

- **Treatment: Acetylcholine** is a chemical in the brain that appears to be involved in learning and memory¹. Cholinesterase is a chemical that breaks down acetylcholine. In patients with Alzheimer's disease, acetylcholine is severely diminished in the brain. Medicines that inhibit cholinesterase will protect acetylcholine from destruction and can help maintain memory, thinking, and attention in people with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease. NMDA receptor antagonists target the glutamate pathway, a new target in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. Abnormal functioning of the chemicals in this pathway can damage nerve cells and impair learning².
- **A management plan** that includes care and supervision is essential. Your loved one's healthcare professionals can help you create a plan and carry it out.
- **Regular doctor visits** help keep track of your loved one's condition. Other problems or illnesses can be checked for and treated.



Four drawings of a clock, done by a person with Alzheimer's disease over a period of 4 years. They show how Alzheimer's affects mental functions such as remembering and organizing.

