

Alzheimer's disease is a brain disorder that gets worse over time. It's characterized by changes in the brain that lead to deposits of certain proteins. Alzheimer's disease causes the brain to shrink and brain cells to eventually die. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia — a gradual decline in memory, thinking, behavior and social skills. These changes affect a person's ability to function.

About 6.5 million people in the United States age 65 and older live with Alzheimer's disease. Among them, more than 70% are 75 years old and older. Of the about 55 million people worldwide with dementia, 60% to 70% are estimated to have Alzheimer's disease.

The early signs of the disease include forgetting recent events or conversations. Over time, it progresses to serious memory problems and loss of the ability to perform everyday tasks.

Medicines may improve or slow the progression of symptoms. Programs and services can help support people with the disease and their caregivers.

There is no treatment that cures Alzheimer's disease. In advanced stages, severe loss of brain function can cause dehydration, malnutrition or infection. These complications can result in death.