



Parish Nurse Notes – June 1, 2025

Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month

Worldwide, more than 55 million people are living with Alzheimer's or another dementia, and two-thirds of Americans have at least one major potential risk factor for dementia.

It's never too early or too late to take actions that help promote a healthy brain. Get familiar with brain health and learn what steps you can take if you or someone you love has memory concerns.

Science shows that adopting healthy habits — like getting exercise and good quality sleep — may reduce the risk of cognitive decline. Incorporate some or all of these 10 Healthy Habits into your life and share them with someone you know.

Positive, everyday actions can make a difference in brain health, even lowering the risk of cognitive decline and possibly Alzheimer's and dementia. Incorporate some or all of these habits into your life to help maintain a healthy brain.

Take charge of your brain health today — it's never too early or too late to start.

Challenge your mind

Be curious! Put your brain to work and do something that is new for you. Learn a new skill. Try something artistic. Challenging your mind may have short- and long-term benefits for your brain.

Stay in school

Education reduces the risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Encourage youth to stay in school and pursue the highest level of training possible. Continue your own education by taking a class at a local library or college, or online.

Get moving

Engage in regular exercise. This includes activities that raise your heart rate and increase blood flow to the brain and body. Find ways to build more movement into your day — walking, dancing, gardening — whatever works for you!

Protect your head

Help prevent an injury to your head. Wear a helmet for activities like biking and wear a seatbelt. Protect yourself while playing sports. Do what you can to prevent falls, especially for older adults.

Be smoke-free

Quitting smoking can lower the risk of cognitive decline back to levels similar to those who have not smoked. It's never too late to stop.

Control your blood pressure

Medications can help lower high blood pressure. And healthy habits like eating right and physical activity can help, too. Work with a health care provider to control your blood pressure.

Manage diabetes

Type 2 diabetes can be prevented or controlled by eating healthier, increasing physical activity and taking medication, if necessary.

Eat right

Eating healthier foods can help reduce your risk of cognitive decline. This includes more vegetables and leaner meats/proteins, along with foods that are less processed and lower in fat. Choose healthier meals and snacks that you enjoy and are available to you.

Maintain a healthy weight

Talk to your health care provider about the weight that is healthy for you. Other healthy habits on this list — eating right, exercising and sleeping well — can help with maintaining a healthy weight.

Sleep well

Good quality sleep is important for brain health. Stay off screens before bed and make your sleep space as comfortable as possible. Do all you can to minimize disruptions. If you have any sleep-related problems, such as sleep apnea, talk to a health care provider.

.Terms for understanding brain health

"Cognitive decline" refers to changes in the ability to think that happens as people age. Some changes are a normal part of getting older, but you can take steps to slow that decline. More significant decline or severe changes are not normal and may be a [sign of Alzheimer's disease or other dementia](#).

"Dementia" is a general term used to describe problems with thinking and memory that are severe enough to interfere with a person's daily life. Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia but there are several kinds of dementia. [Dementia is not a normal part of aging](#).

To contact Diane or Glenn, parish nurses, their email address is: parishnurse@fpcwinc.org or you can leave a message for them at 540-662-3824.

10 WARNING SIGNS OF ALZHEIMER'S WORKSHEET

If you notice any of these signs, take action.

Use this form to note your concerns so you can address them with a friend, family member or doctor.

NOTE: It's possible for individuals to experience one or more of these signs in varying degrees. It is not necessary to experience every sign in order to raise concern.

1. MEMORY LOSS THAT DISRUPTS DAILY LIFE.

One of the most common signs of Alzheimer's disease, especially in the early stages, is forgetting recently learned information. Others include forgetting important dates or events, asking the same question over and over again, or increasingly needing to rely on memory aids (e.g., reminder notes or electronic devices) or family members for things the person used to handle on their own.

What's a typical age-related change? Sometimes forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later.

2. CHALLENGES IN PLANNING OR SOLVING PROBLEMS.

Some people living with dementia may experience changes in their ability to develop and follow a plan or work with numbers. They may have trouble following a familiar recipe or keeping track of monthly bills. They may have difficulty concentrating and take much longer to do things than they did before.

What's a typical age-related change? Making occasional errors when managing finances or household bills.

3. DIFFICULTY COMPLETING FAMILIAR TASKS.

People living with Alzheimer's disease often find it hard to complete routine tasks. Sometimes they may have trouble driving to a familiar location, organizing a grocery list or remembering the rules of a favorite game.

What's a typical age-related change? Occasionally needing help to use microwave settings or to record a TV show.

4. CONFUSION WITH TIME OR PLACE.

People living with Alzheimer's can lose track of dates, seasons and the passage of time. They may have trouble understanding something if it is not happening immediately. Sometimes they may forget where they are or how they got there.

What's a typical age-related change? Getting confused about the day of the week, but figuring it out later.

5. TROUBLE UNDERSTANDING VISUAL IMAGES AND SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS.

For some people, vision problems are a sign of Alzheimer's. This may lead to difficulty with balance or trouble reading. They may also have problems judging distance and determining color or contrast, causing issues with driving.

What's a typical age-related change? Vision changes related to cataracts.

6. **NEW PROBLEMS WITH WORDS IN SPEAKING OR WRITING.**

People living with Alzheimer's may have trouble following or joining a conversation. They may stop in the middle of a conversation and have no idea how to continue, or repeat themselves. They may struggle with vocabulary, have trouble naming a familiar object or use the wrong name.

What's a typical age-related change? Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.

7. **MISPLACING THINGS AND LOSING THE ABILITY TO RETRACE STEPS.**

A person living with Alzheimer's may put things in unusual places. They may lose things and be unable to go back over their steps to find them again. He or she may accuse others of stealing, especially as the disease progresses.

What's a typical age-related change? Misplacing things from time to time and retracing steps to find them.

8. **DECREASED OR POOR JUDGMENT.** Individuals may experience changes in judgment or decision-making. For example, they may use poor judgment when dealing with money, or pay less attention to grooming or keeping themselves clean.

What's a typical age-related change? Making a bad decision once in a while, like neglecting to change the oil in the car.

9. **WITHDRAWAL FROM WORK OR SOCIAL ACTIVITIES.**

A person living with Alzheimer's disease may experience changes in the ability to hold or follow a conversation. As a result, they may withdraw from hobbies, social activities or other engagements. They may have trouble keeping up with a favorite team or activity.

What's a typical age-related change? Sometimes feeling uninterested in family or social obligations.

10. **CHANGES IN MOOD OR PERSONALITY.**

Individuals living with Alzheimer's may experience mood or personality changes. They may be easily upset at home, at work, with friends or when out of their comfort zone.

What's a typical age-related change? Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you're concerned that you or someone you know is displaying any of these signs, take action:

- **Talk to someone you trust.** It can be helpful to confide in a friend or family member. For tips on how to have a conversation, visit [alz.org/memoryconcerns](https://www.alz.org/memoryconcerns).

- **See a doctor.** Get a full medical evaluation to determine if it's Alzheimer's or something else. Early diagnosis gives you a chance to plan for the future, access support services and explore treatment options. To learn more about the diagnostic process, visit alz.org/evaluatememory.
- **Get support and information.** Call the Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900) or visit alz.org/10signs.

Note: This list is for information only and not a substitute for a consultation with a qualified medical professional.

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