

Alzheimer Society of Manitoba

As we age, forgetting is natural and expected. Now, at what point should you consider the occasional memory lapse to be something more serious?

Symptoms of Alzheimer's disease include loss of memory, difficulty with day-to-day tasks, and changes in mood and behaviour. Many people may think these symptoms are part of normal aging, still they aren't.

It is important to see your health care provider when you notice any of these symptoms as they may be due to other conditions such as depression, drug interactions or an infection. If the symptoms are not treatable and progress over time, they may be due to damage to the nerve cells in the brain. If that's the case, getting an early diagnosis is critical for you and your family, to ensure you and your care partners can get the support needed to maintain quality of life and also prepare for your future. If the diagnosis is Alzheimer's disease or any other Dementia, the Alzheimer Society can help.

To help you know what warning signs to look for, the Alzheimer Society has developed the following list of 10 warning signs:

1. Memory loss that affects day-to-day function

It's normal to occasionally forget appointments, colleagues' names or a friend's phone number and remember them later. A person with Alzheimer's disease may forget things more often and not remember them later, especially things that have happened more recently.

2. Difficulty performing familiar tasks

Busy people can be so distracted from time to time that they may leave the carrots on the stove and only remember to serve them at the end of a meal. A person with Alzheimer's disease may have trouble with tasks that have been familiar to them all their lives, such as preparing a meal.

3. Problems with language

Everyone has trouble finding the right word sometimes, but a person with Alzheimer's disease may forget simple words or substitute words, making their sentences difficult to understand.

4. Disorientation of time and place

It's normal to forget the day of the week or your destination – for a moment. But a person with Alzheimer's disease can become lost on their own street, not knowing how they got there or how to get home.

5. Poor or decreased judgment

People may sometimes put off going to their health care provider if they have an infection, but eventually seek medical attention. A person with Alzheimer's disease may have decreased judgment, for example not recognizing a medical problem that needs attention or wearing heavy clothing on a hot day, or not dressing warm enough for winter weather.

6. Problems with abstract thinking

From time to time, people may have difficulty with tasks that require abstract thinking, such as balancing a chequebook. Someone with Alzheimer's disease may have significant difficulties with such tasks, for example not recognizing what the numbers in the chequebook mean.

7. Misplacing things

Anyone can temporarily misplace a wallet or keys. A person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in inappropriate places: an iron in the freezer or a wristwatch in the sugar bowl.

8. Changes in mood and behaviour

Everyone becomes sad or irritable from time to time. Someone with Alzheimer's disease can exhibit varied mood swings – from calm to tears to anger – for no apparent reason.

9. Changes in personality

People's personalities can change somewhat with age. But a person with Alzheimer's disease can become confused, suspicious or withdrawn. Changes may also include apathy, fearfulness or acting out of character.

10. Loss of initiative

It's normal to tire of housework, business activities or social obligations, but most people regain their initiative. A person with Alzheimer's disease may become very passive, and require cues and prompting to become involved. The journey for people affected by dementia can pose many challenges. Knowing where to find reliable information and available resources makes a big difference in helping families cope. Last year, more than 4,500 people in Manitoba developed Alzheimer's disease or another dementia bringing the total to nearly 22,000 Manitobans living with the disease. Communities across Manitoba rely on the Society for individual and family counseling, support groups for people with dementia, caregiver support groups, education sessions, workshops for families and so much more.

Here are some symptoms of caregiver stress;

- **Denial** about the disease and how it will affect your loved one 'I know mom will get better'
- **Anger** at the person with Alzheimer's. Anger is a normal reaction as that there is no cure exists, or that people don't understand what's happening. 'If he asks me that one more time, I'll lose it!'
- **Social withdrawal** from friends and activities that were once fun. 'I don't feel like getting together with friends.'
- **Anxiety** about the future. 'What happens when she needs more care than I can provide'.
- **Depression** that begins to break your spirit and affects how you cope. 'I don't care anymore'.
- **Exhaustion** that makes it nearly impossible to complete necessary daily tasks. 'I'm too tired'.
- **Sleeplessness** caused by never-ending concerns. 'What if she wanders out of the house and gets hurt'?
- **Irritability** that leads to moodiness and triggers negative responses and actions. 'Leave me alone'!
- **Lack of concentration** making it difficult to perform familiar tasks. 'I've been so busy I forgot we had this appointment'.
- **Health problems** that begin to take their toll on you physically and mentally. 'I can't remember the last time I felt good'.

****If you experience any of these signs of stress on a regular basis, please make time to talk to your health care provider. ****

Support groups offer the opportunity to meet, interact with and learn from others who are living with dementia. It's a safe environment where you can share, laugh, and help each other through mutual understanding. Support groups in the Interlake-Eastern region include:

- **Beausejour** **New Time/Location**
East-Gate Lodge Personal Care Home, 646 James St.
Second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 – 8 pm
alzne@alzheimer.mb.ca
- **Gimli**
New Horizons Centre, 17 N Colonization Rd.
Third Monday of the month at 1 pm
alzne@alzheimer.mb.ca
- **Pinawa**
Boardroom at Pinawa Hospital, 30 Vanier Ave.
Second Thursday of the month from 1 – 2:30 pm
alzne@alzheimer.mb.ca
- **Sagkeeng Anicinabe Nation**
SHC Trailer, 50017 (B) Manitoba 11
Third Wednesday of the month at 6:30 – 8 pm
dbourrier@alzheimer.mb.ca
- **Selkirk (Day)**
Woodland Courts – Boardroom, 387 Annie St.
First Thursday of the month at 2pm
alzne@alzheimer.mb.ca
- **Selkirk (Evening)**
Gordon Howard Centre, 384 Eveline St.
First Wednesday of the month at 7 pm
alzne@alzheimer.mb.ca
- **Stonewall**
South Interlake 55 Plus Seniors Centre, 374 1st St. West
Third Tuesday of the month from 6:30 – 8 pm
jjordan@alzheimer.mb.ca

Visit the website for virtual support opportunities:

[In-Person and Virtual Care Partner Support Groups - Alzheimer Society of Manitoba](#)

Samantha Holland, is the First Link Regional Team Lead with the Alzheimer Society in our region. To reach her call 204-268-4752; fax: 204-942-5408 or the helpline is 1-800-378-6699. To learn more please visit [Family Education - Alzheimer Society of Manitoba](#)

The Interlake-Eastern RHA Community Wellness Team offers the Memory and Aging Program. Memory and aging are closely related, and as people age, they often experience changes in their memory. While some degree of memory change is normal, research shows there are effective strategies and skills you can use to help you remember the things that are important to you. **Memory and Aging Program** (MAP), developed by Dr. Angela Troyer, Program Director of Neuropsychology and Cognitive Health and Professional Practice Chief of Psychology at Baycrest Health Sciences at the University of Toronto. The program will help you to:

- Understand what memory is and how it changes with age
- Uncover which factors can impact your memory
- Explore lifestyle changes that can help improve your memory
- Practice memory strategies
- Improve your ability to recall everyday things
- Build confidence in your memory

Memory and Aging Program is offered in-person or virtually. For more information please contact wellness@iehra.ca or call 1-877-979-9355

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204-268-4752 or email alzne@alzheimer.mb.ca