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An Academic Partner of Trinity College Dublin



**TUH
Memory
Assessment
and Support
Service**

Alzheimer's Disease (AD) Factsheet

Dementia is a group of symptoms which can affect memory, thinking and behaviour severely enough to interfere with daily life.

Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is the most common type of dementia. Dementia is the loss of cognitive functioning—thinking, remembering, and reasoning—and behavioural abilities to such an extent that it interferes with a person's daily life and activities.

How does it develop?

A combination of genetic, environmental and lifestyle factors associate with proteins called 'amyloid' and 'tau' which build up in the brain in our 20's and 30's and cause loss of connections between nerve cells (neurons).

Neurons transmit messages between different parts of the brain, and from the brain to muscles and organs in the body. In AD the messages get disrupted and do not flow normally. Not everyone with these proteins will go on to have symptoms of AD but when this does happen the changes get worse over time and normal shrinkage of our brain as we age can be accelerated

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of Alzheimer's vary from person to person but it usually progresses gradually. They include short term memory problems; language issues such as word-finding; vision / spatial issues; impaired reasoning or judgment; orientation difficulties; repeating questions; taking longer to complete normal daily tasks, and for some personality and changes in behaviour.

How is it diagnosed?

We use a combination of memory tests, functional tests, lumbar puncture and scans but our most important clue is the story of your symptoms and how they have changed over time.

What is the treatment for AD?

Although we currently have no drug that can stop these brain changes, drugs called cholinesterase inhibitors may help to reduce symptoms for some patients.

AD is a *gradually* progressive disease and is very much determined by 'events' such as falls, infections and delirium

From the time of diagnosis, our focus will be to maximise your health and wellbeing in order to prevent such events. We will signpost you to available supports in our care pathway.

We will also follow up with you to give any help yourself or you family might need going forward.