

Alzheimer's and Dementia Awareness By Lizzie Danner



November is Alzheimer's Awareness month, and most people have someone in their family, or knows someone that has a family member affected by a memory loss disease. It is very common among the older generations, but not many people actually know the truth about it. There are many things you should know about Alzheimer's and Dementia.

Alzheimer's is a disease in which the cells of the brain die off and degenerate. It slowly dissipates a person's ability to control their thinking, motor skills, and behavior. Dementia is the general term to describe memory loss. Alzheimer's is a branch of Dementia. Dementia is a blanket-term for memory loss diseases. A person with Alzheimer's will most likely act confused, and will forget their surroundings around them. This confusion can lead to mood swings such as anger, sadness, aggression, and frustration. The mood swings can sometimes lead to violent actions because they cannot explain or say what they want to say, and get frustrated.

These memory loss diseases affect many people. According to the Alzheimer's Disease Statistics article from *Alzheimer's News Today*, "about 44 million people in the whole world have Alzheimer's." It is a very common condition, especially given that it is genetic as well. It runs in families, but Alzheimer's or Dementia may not be passed down to everybody. Like many other diseases, this disease can skip generations.

It is also important to pay attention in your family members actions if Dementia runs in the family. Most people start showing signs of a memory loss disease around 65 years of age, however it is possible to develop one of these diseases at a younger age. That would be called Early Onset Alzheimer's/Dementia. There is a way to start noticing signs of either of these conditions. You may start to notice memory loss that affects everyday life, familiar tasks becoming more difficult, new problems forming or understanding speech, poor judgement, and mood swings, according to 10 Early Signs and Symptoms of Alzheimer's from the Alzheimer's Association.

There is also a way to possibly delay the development of Dementia or Alzheimer's, and that is to keep the brain and body active. This helps stimulate the brain, and allows people to recognize more routines that they must remember. The place I volunteer at, which is a Senior Living Center for memory care patients called Artis, use this idea to care for the residents. There are many games, physical activities, music based games, trivia, and much more. It is important to care about people with Dementia and Alzheimer's. Just because they can't remember, doesn't mean they don't have emotions.

It is also important to understand that it is very hard on loved ones and the person who has the disease. It takes quite a lot of patience and energy to deal with these people. The most common thing that I see at Artis is patience in the family and the staff. To be able to take care of a family member with Alzheimer's or Dementia, you would need to be patient. It is a very difficult situation, and it is very emotional. But the best thing that you can do is to be there for them. They are most likely confused or scared, they need to know that someone cares for them.

Hopefully by now, there is a better understanding of Alzheimer's and Dementia. Still, not many people know enough of these diseases. If you still need help, or do not know what to do when you encounter a loved one with Alzheimer's or Dementia, you can call the hotline 1.800.272.3900 from the Alzheimer's association to get more information.