

# Early Onset Alzheimer's Disease

[http://www.alz.org/alzheimers\\_disease\\_early\\_onset.asp?WT.mc\\_id=enews2013\\_06\\_04](http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_early_onset.asp?WT.mc_id=enews2013_06_04)



**Alzheimer's is not just a disease of old age.** Younger-onset (also known as early-onset) Alzheimer's affects people younger than age 65. Nearly 4 percent of the more than 5 million Americans with Alzheimer's have younger-onset.

[Who gets it?](#)

[Causes](#)

[Diagnosis](#)

[Resources](#)

## Who gets early onset Alzheimer's?

Many people with early onset are in their 40s and 50s. They have families, careers or are even caregivers themselves when Alzheimer's disease strikes. In the United States, it is estimated that more than 200,000 people have early onset.

## Diagnosing early onset Alzheimer's

Since health care providers generally don't look for Alzheimer's disease in younger people, getting an accurate diagnosis of early onset Alzheimer's can be a long and frustrating process. Symptoms may be incorrectly attributed to stress or there may be conflicting diagnoses from different health care professionals. People who have early onset Alzheimer's may be in any stage of dementia – [early stage](#), [middle stage](#) or [late stage](#). The disease affects each person differently and symptoms will vary.

**If you have early onset Alzheimer's, you are not alone.**

The Alzheimer's Association can provide information, support and referrals. [Find your local chapter.](#)

### If you are experiencing memory problems:

- Have a comprehensive medical evaluation with a doctor who specializes in Alzheimer's disease. Getting a diagnosis involves a medical exam and possibly cognitive tests, a neurological exam and/or brain imaging. Call [your local chapter](#) of the Alzheimer's Association for a referral.

- Write down symptoms of memory loss or other cognitive difficulties to share with your health care professional.
- Keep in mind that there is no one test that confirms Alzheimer's disease. A diagnosis is only made after a comprehensive medical evaluation.

**Learn more:** [Steps to Diagnosis](#), [Finding the Right Physician](#), [Medical Tests](#), [Signs and Symptoms](#)

[Back to top](#)

Sign up for our weekly e-newsletter  
Receive tips for living with younger/early onset Alzheimer's disease and planning for the future. [Subscribe now](#)

## Causes of Early Onset Including Genetics

Doctors do not understand why most cases of early onset Alzheimer's appear at such a young age. But in a few hundred families worldwide, scientists have pinpointed several rare genes that directly cause Alzheimer's. People who inherit these rare genes tend to develop symptoms in their 30s, 40s and 50s. When Alzheimer's disease is caused by deterministic genes, it is called “familial Alzheimer's disease,” and many family members in multiple generations are affected.

[Early Onset and Genetics](#): HBO Video (26 min.)



**Learn more:** [Alzheimer's and Genetics](#), [Genetic Testing Fact Sheet](#)

