

Alzheimer's: It's A Brain Disease

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The 2015 **Alzheimer's Association** fact sheet states someone in the United States develops Alzheimer's every 67 seconds and goes on to state in 2050, someone in the United States will develop the disease every 33 seconds. So, in the time it takes to scramble your morning eggs, someone will develop Alzheimer's.

Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary defines memory as the mental faculty of storing past experiences and recalling them at will. We have come to understand Alzheimer's and related dementias not only causes one to lose their memory but also there is the loss of social skills, intellect and they may show emotional and behavior changes.

Alzheimer's/dementia is considered a brain disease. Plaques and tangles form in the brain and start the process which will compromise the brain. We now know Alzheimer's has a set circuit that it follows through the brain. As it travels through the brain, the brain becomes more and more damaged.

In the beginning stage, it first affects the area of the brain that handles the memory, learning, thinking and planning. One may not really be too aware that something is starting at this point. There is very little impact on one's daily life.

In the mild to moderate Alzheimer's stage, more plaques and tangles are formed. Speaking, understanding speech, perception and judgement will be affected. There may also be changes in one's personality and behavior issues. Individuals will become more confused and their daily lives will start to be affected by their memory loss. This is the beginning of the person's decline in remembering loved ones. This stage is when the majority of individuals are diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Some will be able to understand they have memory loss. Others may never be able to understand they have Alzheimer's. This is due to either not being advised they have the disease or because that part of the brain has been so compromised the individual does not have the ability to understand.

By the final stage of Alzheimer's, the brain is seriously compromised and has taken a physical toll on the body. Individuals will not be able to care for themselves, communicate and even know their own family members. They will be totally depended on someone to care for all their needs.

Not understanding memory loss can be frustrating for both the caregiver and the person with memory loss at any stage. St. John's Community Care works with family caregivers and our employees to help each to better understand memory loss. This is accomplished through training, workshops, support groups and printed materials. The outcome of these educational endeavors improves one's working knowledge of how to care for someone with memory loss and helps to create a less stressful working relationship between the caregiver and the one experiencing memory loss.

If you or someone you know feels they are experiencing memory loss, consider contacting St. John's Community Care. We can provide assistance and education on how to handle memory loss issues, direct you to appropriate support groups and/or work with you to get in-home to care to relieve caregiving duties and stress.

You're not alone when it comes to facing the journey of living with memory loss or caring for a loved one who has memory loss. Together, we can make a positive difference in the life of someone living with this devastating brain disease.