

senior focus

The seven stages of Alzheimer's disease

Guidelines of what can be expected as the disease progresses

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive and debilitating condition that slowly robs a person of their memories and personality.

Alzheimer's disease is a form of dementia that produces various symptoms that occur in stages, ultimately arriving at a point when a person can no longer live independently due to cognitive decline.

The Fisher Center for Alzheimer's Research Foundation says there are seven clinical stages of Alzheimer's. Stages one through three are the pre-dementia stages, while stages four through seven are the dementia stages. Here is a close look at what these stages

entail, according to the Global Deterioration Scale.

Stage one.

There is no cognitive decline, nor noticeable symptoms.

Stage two.

A person may experience very mild cognitive decline. This can include one feeling like he or she is having memory lapses, but no symptoms of dementia can be detected by others, including medical professionals.

Stage three.

During stage three, mild cognitive decline begins to become noticeable. Friends, family or coworkers begin to notice difficulties, which may include problems coming up

with the right words or names; trouble remembering names; greater difficulty performing tasks; and losing or misplacing a valuable object.

Stage four.

A careful medical interview should reveal symptoms of moderate cognitive decline. Forgetfulness of recent events; difficulty performing complex tasks like planning a meal for guests or paying bills; forgetfulness about one's own personal history; and becoming moody or withdrawn are possible.

Stage five.

Cognitive decline continues to progress to where it becomes moderately severe. Gaps in memory are

noticeable and individuals likely will need help with everyday activities. Some may be unable to recall their addresses or telephone numbers, while others may be confused about the day or where they are. Stage five is usually the stage when a person can no longer live without assistance.

Stage six.

Very severe memory loss, loss of communication skills and inability to recognize

loved ones occurs during the severe cognitive decline stage. One will need total care.

Stage seven.

This is the end-stage of the disease and is marked by profound cognitive impairment. Loss of mobility and effective communication typically occurs at this stage.

It's important to note that these stages are general guidelines of what can be expected as Alzheimer's disease progresses. Symptoms may



vary among different people and not everyone with Alzheimer's will progress through these stages at the same rate.

Hobbies to help get seniors out and about



The threat posed by social isolation has been known to medical researchers and health care professionals for years, but the issue gained wider attention during the pandemic. Restrictions on social gatherings during the pandemic opened millions of people's eyes to the ill effects of social isolation and while that threat proved temporary for the majority of people across the globe, many seniors continue to live largely isolated lives.

According to the Mayo Clinic, depression, anxiety, increased risk of suicide and various chronic health problems are some of the outcomes associated with loneliness. That's a troubling assessment that becomes even more disconcerting when considering a general decline in socialization as evidenced by the 2021 American Perspectives Survey. Survey participants indicated they have fewer close friendships than they once did, speak with their friends less often and

rely less on friends for personal support. That's challenging for adults of all ages, but it can be especially difficult for aging adults, who may be dealing with the loss of a spouse or other close confidantes they would otherwise rely on when confronting personal problems.

Hobbies that promote socialization can help aging adults reestablish friendships and build new ones, paying dividends that can have a profound impact on their overall health. With that in mind, adults who feel as though their social circles are shrinking in mid-life or in retirement can look to these activities as means to rebuilding their social lives.

• **Book club:** A book club offers multiple benefits to adults. Book clubs are inherently social and tend to bring like-minded individuals together, which can help build new and lasting friendships that extend beyond weekly discussions. A 2021 study published in the journal

Neurology also linked regular reading to a lower risk of developing dementia.

• **Sports:** Sports provide another avenue to socialize with like-minded individuals. Golf is not a team sport, but it is typically played in groups of two or four, making it an ideal activity for adults with free time on their hands to get out and about and meet other people. Leagues for softball, bowling and pickleball also provide opportunities to socialize and many adults are participating in such leagues for that very reason. A CivicScience study released in 2025 found that 49 percent of adults who planned to participate in adult recreational sports leagues were doing so for social interaction and the chance to make friends.

• **Travel:** Travel can provide another means for aging adults to make friends. Group tours, day trips to local attractions arranged by township recreational offices or even overseas trips with friends you've fallen out of touch with can be a great means to build new friendships and reinvigorate old ones, all the while getting you out of the house.

These are just some ways for men and women to get out of the house and socialize with others their age, a worthy endeavor that can be highly beneficial to adults' overall health.

Strategies to safeguard mental health

Seniors may not have come of age in a world where mental health was prioritized, and thanks to that aging men and women may not recognize where their mental health is suffering and what they can do to combat such problems. Recognition of the importance of mental health is a step in the right direction and seniors also can consider these strategies to safeguard their mental health.

• **Recognize your vulnerability.** The World Health Organization (WHO) notes older adults are uniquely vulnerable to potential mental health issues. Seniors also are more likely than others to experience adverse events like the loss of a loved one or even a loss of purpose, which can affect anyone upon retirement. Recognition of this vulnerability may be enough to compel seniors to seek advice and assistance on how to safeguard their mental health from age-related stressors.

• **Take time out if you're a caregiver.** The WHO notes that many older adults serve as caregivers for spouses with chronic health conditions, including dementia. The Alzheimer's Association reports that studies have found that 70 percent of caregivers report feeling stress related to coordination of care, while two in three caregivers have difficulty finding resources

and support for their needs. Seniors who have taken on caregiving duties for a loved one must protect their own mental health by taking time out to care for themselves as well. Work with family members to share responsibilities when caring for a loved one. If family members cannot pitch in, then work with local government agencies to alleviate some of the stress of caregiving.

• **Make a concerted effort to socialize.** A 2025 report from the WHO indicated that roughly one-fourth of all older adults are affected by social isolation and loneliness. Social connection can significantly improve mental health and provide a sense of life satisfaction while improving quality of life. Seniors are urged to prioritize socialization. Many community-based groups, including government offices, run programs designed specifically to facilitate socialization among older residents. Take advantage of such programs whenever possible. Seniors living alone also may want to consider relocating to communities exclusive to people age 55 and over, as such developments typically offer an array of socialization opportunities to residents.

Seniors are particularly vulnerable to mental health

issues, but older adults can take many steps to safeguard their mental health.

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