

# ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

## FACTS

- Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is the most common type of dementia and affects millions of people.
- It is more common in women than men, and more common in African Americans and Hispanics than Caucasians.
- AD is characterized by a progressive loss of memory, which interferes with daily tasks.
- The following parts of the brain can be affected:
  - Hippocampus – Structure most important to the sorting and storing of memories
  - Temporal lobe – Responsible for conscious and long-term memory and interpretation of information from the senses
  - Parietal lobes – Important for the processing of memories
- Plaques and tangles are thought to damage the brain's nerve cells, interrupting communication between them.
  - Plaques – Clusters of protein that collect between brain cells
  - Tangles – Twisted strands or knots of brain cell

## RISK FACTORS

- Age – Patients are usually 65 years or older at diagnosis
- Family history of Alzheimer's
- History of head trauma
- Long-term illnesses such as high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, and heart disease
- Sleep disorders
- Down's syndrome

## SYMPTOMS

- Memory loss that disrupts daily life
- Loss of recently learned information
- Difficulty finding words
- Impulsiveness
- Difficulty making decisions
- Difficulty completing tasks
- Getting lost in new places and eventually familiar places
- Withdrawal from hobbies and social engagements
- Changes in mood or personality
- Gradual progression of symptoms

## DIAGNOSIS

- Assessment through review of medical history and medications, observations during the appointment, and interviews with family or close friends
- Physical and neurological exam, including memory test and depression screen
- Lab studies, including blood count and glucose, thyroid, Vitamin B12, and Vitamin D levels
- A possible CT scan of the head or an MRI of the brain

## TREATMENT

- Currently there is no cure, but research is ongoing.
- Memory medications can lessen the symptoms and improve quality of life.
- Engage in healthy lifestyle activities such as exercise, a Mediterranean diet, new socializations, and limiting alcohol.