

OXIHER HEALTH PRIORITIES

FOCUS ON ALZHEIMER'S AND BRAIN HEALTH



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Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness aims to increase public understanding of Alzheimer's disease and other brain disorders. Led by the **Alzheimer's Association**, the initiative encourages individuals and communities to engage in activities that promote brain health, support caregivers, and honor those living with these conditions. Brain disorders—including Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other forms of dementia—are often misunderstood, under diagnosed, or overlooked. Awareness efforts help educate the public on symptoms, disease progression, risk factors, and the importance of early detection. Greater awareness can lead to earlier diagnosis, more timely access to care, better planning, and improved quality of life for patients and families alike.

What is Alzheimer's Disease?

Alzheimer's is a brain disease that slowly damages memory, thinking skills, and behavior over time. It is the **most common cause of dementia** among older adults. The disease causes brain cells to die and lose their connections, resulting in trouble with memory and decision-making and, eventually, loss of independence.

Who is Most Affected?

Alzheimer's disease primarily affects people aged **65 and older**. However, early-onset Alzheimer's can occur in people as young as their 40s or 50s. Women are more likely to have the disease than men – almost two out of every three Americans living with the disease. In addition, Black and Hispanic people have a higher risk of developing Alzheimer's than non-Hispanic Whites. Black adults are about twice as likely, and Hispanic adults are about one and a half times more likely to be diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

Staggering Statistics

As of 2024, approximately **6.9 million Americans** aged 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's. Alzheimer's disease is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States with one in three seniors dying from Alzheimer's or another form of dementia. In Louisiana, as of 2021, approximately **92,000 individuals** aged 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. However, Alzheimer's extends beyond the individual. 204,000 family members and primary caregivers are helping care for loved ones in Louisiana with Alzheimer's disease and various dementias.

Treatment and Disease Outlook

There is no cure for Alzheimer's disease yet, but some treatments can help slow down symptoms for a short time and improve quality of life. In 2024, the **FDA** approved a new drug called Kisunla. It's an injection that works by targeting protein clumps in the brain, called amyloid plaques, which are linked to the disease. **New blood tests** are also making it easier and faster to diagnose Alzheimer's, which could help people get treatment earlier.

Caring for someone with Alzheimer's or another brain disease can be very hard. Families often face stress, sadness, and exhaustion as their loved one's memory and abilities change. Many caregivers have to take time off work or spend their own money to help with care. This can lead to money problems and affect their own health. Sometimes, caregivers don't know where to find help or feel like they have to do everything alone. Support groups, community services, and time off through respite care can make a big difference.

Other Brain Diseases Recognized This Month

In addition to Alzheimer's, brain health extends to other neurological conditions such as:

- Parkinson's disease
- Vascular dementia
- Multiple sclerosis
- Lewy body dementia
- Traumatic brain injuries

These conditions can significantly impact a person's quality of life and often require comprehensive care and support.



Bringing Hope Through Understanding

Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month reminds patients, families, researchers, and advocates that they are not alone. Whether you're learning more about symptoms, supporting a loved one, or spreading awareness in your community, every action helps.

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