

Go Purple and Get Talking for Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month in June

June is Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month. The Alzheimer's Association - Western Carolina Chapter is encouraging people to wear purple to raise awareness of Alzheimer's and honor those affected by the disease.

The organization is also encouraging conversations about Alzheimer's with a family member or friend who is exhibiting symptoms. A 2018 Alzheimer's Association survey found a majority of Americans would be concerned about offending a family member (76 percent), or ruining their relationship (69 percent), if they were to approach that person about observed signs of Alzheimer's.

Every 65 seconds someone in the United States develops Alzheimer's disease. It is America's sixth leading cause of death, affecting more than 5 million Americans and 16 million caregivers. Despite Alzheimer's growing impact, many families struggle with discussing the issue.

"We are asking everyone to come together to support Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month with the movement's signature color - purple - and to talk about memory loss and other potential warning signs of Alzheimer's disease," said Katherine L. Lambert, CEO of the Alzheimer's Association - Western Carolina Chapter. "Close family members are typically the first to notice memory issues or cognitive problems, but they are often hesitant to say something - even when they know something is wrong. Having these conversations is important especially since growing evidence suggests that early detection and diagnosis can lead to a more fulfilling life."

To help people understand early symptoms of Alzheimer's or behaviors that merit discussion, the Alzheimer's Association offers 10 Warning Signs. Should these signs appear, it is important to talk about them with the person experiencing symptoms and encourage them to speak with a medical professional.

10 Early Signs and Symptoms of Alzheimer's

Memory loss that disrupts daily life may be a symptom of Alzheimer's or other dementia. Alzheimer's is a brain disease that causes a slow decline in memory, thinking and reasoning skills. There are 10 warning signs and symptoms. If you notice any of them, don't ignore them. Schedule an appointment with your doctor.

1) Memory loss that disrupts daily life One of the most common signs of Alzheimer's disease, especially in the early stage, is forgetting recently learned information. Others include forgetting important dates or events, asking for the same information over and over, and increasingly needing to rely on memory aids (e.g., reminder notes or electronic devices) or family members for things they used to handle on their own.

What's a typical age-related change? Sometimes forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later.

2) Challenges in planning or solving problems Some people may experience changes in their ability to develop and follow a plan or work with numbers. They may have trouble following a familiar recipe or keeping track of monthly bills. They may have difficulty concentrating and take much longer to do things than they did before.

3) Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure People with Alzheimer's often find it hard to complete daily tasks. Sometimes, people may have trouble driving to a familiar location, managing a budget at work or remembering the rules of a favorite game.

What's a typical age-related change? Occasionally needing help to use the settings on a microwave or to record a television show.

4) Confusion with time or place People with Alzheimer's can lose track of dates, seasons and the passage of time. They may have trouble understanding something if it is not happening immediately. Sometimes they may forget where they are or how they got there.

What's a typical age-related change? Getting confused about the day of the week but figuring it out later.

5) Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships For some people, having vision problems is a sign of Alzheimer's. They may have difficulty reading, judging distance and determining color or contrast, which may cause problems with driving.

What's a typical age-related change? Vision changes related to cataracts.

6) New problems with words in speaking or writing People with Alzheimer's may have trouble following or joining a conversation. They may stop in the middle of a conversation and have no idea how to continue or they may repeat themselves. They may struggle with vocabulary, have problems finding the right word or call things by the wrong name (e.g., calling a "watch" a "hand-clock").

What's a typical age-related change? Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.

7) Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps A person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in unusual places. They may lose things and be unable to go back over their steps to find them again. Sometimes, they may accuse others of stealing. This may occur more frequently over time.

What's a typical age-related change? Misplacing things from time to time and retracing steps to find them.

8) Decreased or poor judgment People with Alzheimer's may experience changes in judgment or decision-making. For example, they may use poor judgment when dealing with money, giving large amounts to telemarketers. They may pay less attention to grooming or keeping themselves clean.

What's a typical age-related change? Making a bad decision once in a while.

9) Withdrawal from work or social activities A person with Alzheimer's may start to remove themselves from hobbies, social activities, work projects or sports. They may have trouble keeping up with a favorite sports team or remembering how to complete a favorite hobby. They also may avoid being social because of the changes they have experienced.

What's a typical age-related change? Sometimes feeling weary of work, family and social obligations.

10) Changes in mood and personality The mood and personalities of people with Alzheimer's can change. They can become confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful or anxious. They may be easily upset at home, at work, with friends or in places where they are out of their comfort zone.

What's a typical age-related change? Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.

The Western Carolina Chapter and supporters are hosting many events and education programs to commemorate Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month. Information about the events and other resources are available at their website: www.alz.org.

Do You Have a Coat or Blanket You Would Like to Donate?

The Faith-Based Center of Hope continues their "Warm Coats, Warm Hearts" program throughout the year. They distribute coats and blankets to several of the churches and schools in Anson County as well as directly to those people in need.

Now that winter is over, do you have a coat or blanket that you can contribute to this cause?

To donate coats and blankets or to request help, please contact Vancine Sturdivant at 704-848-4412.



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