

Alzheimer's disease: 10 warning signs



In the next decade Canada's over-65 population will grow considerably, and along with it the number of older members who make their homes in housing co-operatives. The question of how to help members stay in their homes as long as possible has been the priority of CHF Canada's Aging in Place Committee since 2010.

Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia primarily affect older Canadians, and the idea of addressing the issue of this disease within our co-op housing community is an initiative of the Committee.

The goal of this pamphlet is to equip co-op members, directors, and managers with some basic information about this progressive disease to promote understanding and support for co-op members living with Alzheimer's.

CHF Canada would like to thank the Alzheimer Society of Canada for giving permission to use this material.

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive, degenerative disease of the brain. Symptoms include loss of memory, difficulty with day-to-day tasks, and changes in mood and behaviour. People may think these symptoms are part of normal aging but they aren't. If you notice any of these symptoms or changes in abilities or behaviour, it is important to see a doctor. The changes may be due to other conditions such as depression, drug interactions or an infection. If the diagnosis is Alzheimer's disease, it is best to get an early diagnosis in order to receive the proper treatment, information and support. Your local Alzheimer Society is here to help.

To help you know what warning signs to look for, the Alzheimer Society has developed the following list:

Sign 1: Memory loss that affects day-to-day abilities

It's normal to occasionally forget appointments, colleagues' names or a friend's phone number and remember them later. A person with Alzheimer's disease may forget things more often or have difficulty recalling information that has recently been learned.

Sign 2: Difficulty performing familiar tasks

Busy people can be so distracted from time to time that they may forget to serve part of a meal and only remember later. A person with Alzheimer's disease may have trouble completing tasks that have been familiar to them all their lives, such as meal preparation or playing a game.

Sign 3: Problems with language

Everyone has trouble finding the right word sometimes, but a person with Alzheimer's disease may forget simple words or substitute words, making sentences difficult to understand.

Sign 4: Disorientation in time and space

It's normal to forget the day of the week or your destination—for a moment. But a person with Alzheimer's disease can become lost on their own street, not knowing how they got there or how to get home.



The **CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING FEDERATION** of Canada

www.chfcanada.coop | 1.800.465.2752

Alzheimer's disease: 10 warning signs *continued*

Sign 5: Impaired judgment

From time to time, people can make questionable decisions such as putting off seeing a doctor when they have an infection. A person with Alzheimer's disease may experience changes in judgment or decision making, for example not recognizing a medical problem that needs attention or wearing heavy clothing on a hot day.

Sign 6: Problems with abstract thinking

From time to time, people may have difficulty with tasks that require abstract thinking, such as balancing a cheque book. Someone with Alzheimer's disease may have significant difficulties with such tasks, for example not understanding what numbers are and how they are used.

Sign 7: Misplacing things

Anyone can temporarily misplace a wallet or keys. A person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in inappropriate places: an iron in the freezer or a wristwatch in the sugar bowl.

Sign 8: Changes in mood and behaviour

Everyone becomes sad or moody from time to time. Someone with Alzheimer's disease can exhibit varied mood swings—from calm to tears to anger—for no apparent reason.

Sign 9: Changes in personality

People's personalities can change in subtle ways over time. A person with Alzheimer's disease may experience more striking personality changes and can become confused, suspicious or withdrawn. Changes may also include apathy, fearfulness or acting out of character.

Sign 10: Loss of initiative

At times, it's normal to tire of housework, business activities or social obligations, but most people regain their initiative. A person with Alzheimer's disease may become very passive, apathetic and require cues and prompting to become involved.

The Alzheimer Society is the leading nationwide health charity for people living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Active in more than 150 communities across Canada, the Society

- offers information, support and education programs for people with dementia, their families and caregivers
- funds research to find a cure and improve the care of people with dementia
- promotes public education and awareness of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias to ensure people know where to turn for help
- influences policy and decision-making to address the needs of people with dementia and their caregivers.

For more information, contact your local Alzheimer Society by email at info@alzheimer.ca, or visit our website at www.alzheimer.ca.

Alzheimer Society of Canada

20 Eglinton Avenue West, 16th Floor
Toronto, Ontario, M4R 1K8
Tel: 416-488-8772 | 1-800-616-8816
Fax: 416-322-6656

