



Extension Connection

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The mission of K-State Research and Extension Family and Consumer Sciences is to link education with life experiences to help people improve their lives, their families and their communities. Family and Consumer Sciences professionals support essential life skills including Community Development, Healthy Lifestyle Choices, Leadership & Volunteer Development, Relationship Development and Resource Management.

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Alzheimer's 101

I would like you to take a moment and think of all the people you know (or have heard about) with Alzheimer's disease. Most of us can name at least one, if not many more. Sadly, more than 5 million Americans are currently living with Alzheimer's, and that number is expected to rise as high as 16 million by the year 2050. One of the biggest misconceptions about Alzheimer's is that it cannot kill you – but it can, and it is the 6th leading cause of death in the United States. In fact, many scientists have named Alzheimer's "the biggest health crisis facing the world today".

So, what is Alzheimer's? Alzheimer's disease is an irreversible, progressive brain disease that slowly destroys memory and thinking skills and, eventually, the ability to carry out the simplest tasks. It works to destroy your brain when abnormal lesions clog the brain and interrupt the flow of communication between the neurons. The hippocampus, where short-term memory is stored, is one of the first areas of the brain attacked by the disease. This is why individuals may be able to recall stories from their youth, yet cannot remember what they had to eat for lunch a few hours ago. As the disease progresses, the entire brain will experience the effects of the disease. Sadly, this deterioration can lead to death.

Researchers strongly believe that early detection of Alzheimer's disease will be a key to understanding how to prevent, slow, and ultimately stop the disease in the future. The first step is understanding the 10 warning signs of the disease, as defined by the Alzheimer's Association:

1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life
2. Challenges in planning or solving problems
3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work, or at leisure
4. Confusion with time or place

5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships
6. New problems with words in speaking or writing
7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
8. Decreased or poor judgment
9. Withdrawal from work or social activities
10. Changes in mood and personality

Every individual who suffers from Alzheimer's disease may experience one or more of these warning signs to varying degrees. If you notice any of these warning signs in yourself or a loved one, please see a doctor as soon as possible. It may not be Alzheimer's disease, but if it is, there are numerous benefits to early detection and diagnosis.

Although Alzheimer's disease cannot be prevented, slowed, or cured, there are steps you can take to live an overall brain-healthy lifestyle. Taking steps *now* to adopt or maintain a healthy lifestyle will improve your overall health and well-being, but also help to reduce your risk for cognitive decline, heart disease, and other debilitating and chronic diseases. Make it a priority to:

- Engage in regular exercise for at least 150 minutes per week
- Quit smoking
- Control your blood pressure and strive to maintain a healthy weight
- Wear a helmet and protect your head
- Eat a healthy diet that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Stay social with friends, family, and in your community
- Challenge your brain by learning something new, playing games or cards, and trying new things

To learn more about Alzheimer's disease, join K-State Research and Extension on Tuesday, February 27th, at 11:15am at the Southeast Area K-State Research and Extension Facility, 400 hwy and 32nd Road, Parsons, KS. The cost is free, and the time to learn is now. Every 66 seconds, someone in the United States develops Alzheimer's. Will you be next?

For additional information, contact the Wildcat Extension District, Crawford County, 620-724-8233, Wilson County, 620-378-2167, Labette County, 620-784-5337, Montgomery County, 620-331-2690, Pittsburg Office, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP), 620-232-1930. Our website is <http://www.wildcatdistrict.k-state.edu/> or follow us on Facebook: Wildcat Extension District.

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