

EARLY DETECTION GUIDE: ALZHEIMER'S & DEMENTIA

What Are Alzheimer's & Dementia?

- **Alzheimer's disease** is the most common cause of dementia.
- **Dementia** is a general term for a decline in memory, thinking, and behavior that interferes with daily life. Alzheimer's and dementia are not a normal part of aging.

Early Warning Signs & Symptoms

Some changes in memory and thinking can occur with normal aging. Look for changes from a person's usual behavior, especially if they persist:

- **Memory & Thinking:**
 - Memory loss that disrupts daily life
 - Challenges in planning or solving problems
 - Confusion with time or place
- **Daily Functioning & Safety**
 - Difficulty completing familiar tasks
 - Decreased or poor judgment
- **Communication**
 - Problems with words in speaking or writing
- **Mood, Personality, & Behavior**
 - Changes in mood and personality
 - Withdrawal from work or social activities
- **Visual & Spatial Changes**
 - Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships
 - Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps

When to Seek Evaluation

Talk to a health care provider if:



Symptoms are new, worsening, or affecting daily life



Others notice changes



There are safety concerns (wandering, missed medications)



How Is It Tested?

There is **no single test**, but evaluation may include:

1. Medical & Cognitive Assessment

- Health history and medication review
- Brief memory and thinking tests

2. Lab Test

- Blood tests to rule out other causes (e.g., vitamin deficiencies, thyroid issues)

3. Brain Imaging

- MRI or CT scans to assess brain structure

4. Biomarker Testing

- Biomarkers detect physical changes in the brain linked to Alzheimer's disease and can improve diagnostic accuracy.
 - Blood Tests
 - Cerebrospinal Fluid (CSF) Tests
 - PET Brain Scans

What to Know:

- Often recommended by specialists
- Not required for every patient
- May help confirm diagnosis or guide treatment options

Why Early Detection Matters



- Access to treatments that may slow progression
- Time to plan for care, finances, and legal needs
- Opportunity to make lifestyle changes
- Connection to support services

Brain Health Tips

- Stay physically active
- Keep your mind engaged
- Maintain social connections
- Eat a heart-healthy diet
- Manage blood pressure, diabetes, and sleep

Community Resources

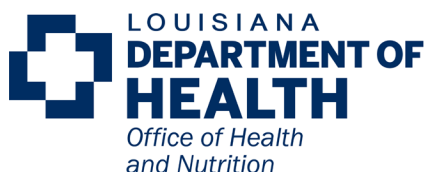
- Local health departments
- Senior and community centers
- Memory clinics and specialists
- Caregiver support groups and respite
- Health-related non-profits/ Community service non-profits

Next Steps After Evaluation or Diagnosis

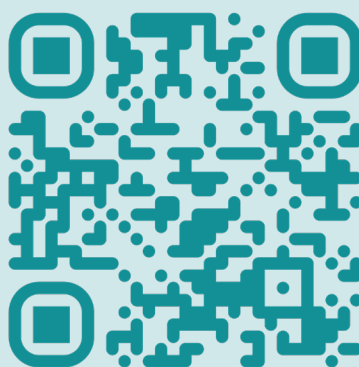
- Discuss results and treatment options with your provider
- Involve family or trusted support people
- Create a care and safety plan
- Ask about clinical trials or new therapies
- Connect with community and caregiver resources



This guide is for educational purposes and does not replace professional medical advice.



Additional Information



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Prefer to connect directly? Reach out to us at wellahead@la.gov or 1-844-522-4323.