

Alzheimer's 101

RADIO & NEWS RELEASE QUICK TIPS

60 second radio program advertisement and/or print program advertisement:

More than 5 million Americans are currently living with Alzheimer's disease, and by the year 2050, this number could rise as high as 16 million. Alzheimer's is currently the 6th leading cause of death in the United States, and is a devastating disease. K-State Research and Extension is currently providing education on Alzheimer's disease, the warning signs, benefits of early detection and diagnosis, and steps that you can take *now* to better your own brain health. We invite you to join us on [date] at [time] at [location] to learn more about Alzheimer's and what you can do to better your own health. 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?

Sample news release/newsletter column:

I'd 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. Alzheimer's works to destroy your brain when abnormal lesions – called beta-amyloid plaques and neurofibrillary tangles – 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, resulting in massive cell loss and shrinking of brain tissue. 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 to early detection 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 numerous steps you can take to live an overall brain-healthy lifestyle. Doing so can improve your overall health and well-being, but may also reduce your risk of cognitive decline as you age. It is best to adopt these practices early, and to practice them throughout your entire life – but, it is never too late to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Make it a priority to:

- Engaging 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

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.

Alzheimer's disease is a crisis we are going to be facing worldwide until a medical breakthrough occurs. If you or someone you know is experiencing symptoms of cognitive decline, the best advice is to see your doctor as soon as possible. It might not be Alzheimer's disease, but if it is, there are steps that you can take to prepare yourself and your loved ones for a life with Alzheimer's disease. We urge you to *be proactive in your own health care*.

To learn more about Alzheimer's disease, join K-State Research and Extension on [date] at [time] at [location] to learn more about Alzheimer's and what you can do to better your own health. 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?