

# Rehab News



Submitted By: Therapy Department at Healthcare Therapy Services, Inc.

## November is National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month

According to the Alzheimer Society, almost 40 percent of people over the age of 65 experience some form of memory loss. When there is no underlying medical condition causing this memory loss, it is known as "age-associated memory impairment," which is considered a part of the normal aging process.

Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are not a part of normal aging. Alzheimer's is a type of dementia that affects memory, thinking and behavior. It is a degenerative disease of the brain, causing symptoms to develop slowly and get worse over time. Age-associated memory impairment and dementia can be told apart in a number of ways. Below are some examples.

Signs of Normal Aging	Signs of Dementia
Sometimes forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later.	Memory loss that disrupts daily life.
Making occasional errors when balancing a checkbook.	Challenges in planning or solving problems.
Occasionally needing help to use the settings on a microwave or to record a television show.	Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure.
Confused about day of the week, but figuring it out later.	Confusion with time or place.
Vision changes related to cataracts.	Trouble understanding images and spatial relationships.
Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.	New problems with words in speaking or writing.
Misplacing things and retracing steps to find them.	Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps.
Making a bad decision once in a while.	Decreased or poor judgment.
Feeling weary of work, family and social obligations.	Withdrawal from work or social activities.
Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.	Changes in mood and personality.

If you notice any of the warning signs of dementia, do not ignore them or hesitate to make an appointment with your doctor. Early detection can help delay the progression of the disease and treatment can help maintain independence longer.

### Therapy's Role in Dementia Care

At Healthcare Therapy Services, our therapists utilize a specialized dementia care program titled **Embracing the Cognitive Spectrum**. This program focuses on utilizing the Allen Cognitive Level Framework to recognize and reinforce use of remaining abilities to help those living with dementia reach their highest functional level. After conducting tests, therapists and other care givers can adapt environment, activities and incorporate personal life history (hobbies, music, daily routines, etc.) to develop a person-centered care plan. Therapists identify specific communication techniques such as rate of speech, processing time, gestures, visual props, and offer a cueing hierarchy to aide in effective communication. Caregiver, family and interdisciplinary team education is provided to enhance relationships through appropriate communication for meaningful social interactions.