

## Terms and Definitions

**Acetylcholine:** A chemical in the brain that helps with attention and memory.

**Activities of daily living (ADLs):** Basic things a person does during their day. ADLs include moving from place to place, bathing and showering, dressing, feeding oneself, personal hygiene and grooming, and toilet hygiene.

**Adaptive devices:** Tools that help with daily activities. These tools may include an electronic pill box that reminds you when to take your medicines, or a cane, walker, or wheelchair to help with balance.

**Adult day health programs:** Programs that have medical staff on site who can help with medicines, wellness activities, and rehabilitation.

**Adult day programs:** Programs for people with memory loss or other health issues to help them stay active and connected to others. Activities may include social time, creative projects, exercise, and meals.

**Advance care planning:** A process that helps you know and communicate your values and goals for medical care. This planning can help guide current and future decisions about your healthcare.

**Advance directive:** A form that states your wishes about the kind of healthcare you do and do not want if you become very ill. Also called a *healthcare directive* or *living will*.

**Aerobic activity:** Exercise that increases your breathing and heart rates.

**Amnestic:** Problems with short or long-term memory.

**Amyloid beta:** A protein that builds up between brain cells and forms *amyloid plaques*. This occurs in Alzheimer disease.

**Amyloid plaque:** A clump of the protein *amyloid beta* around brain cells. This occurs in Alzheimer disease.

**Care partner:** Anyone who supports or cares for a loved one with memory loss. Also called a *caregiver*.

**Cholinesterase inhibitors:** Medicines that stop the breakdown of *acetylcholine*, a brain chemical that helps with attention and memory.

**Clinical trials:** Research studies that assign 1 or more treatments to participants. Scientists monitor these people to see how the treatments affect their health.

**Dementia:** Changes in memory or thinking that interfere with daily life. For example, a person might have problems remembering what they did recently, figuring out how to do a common task like cooking or paying bills, or finding their way to a familiar place.

**Dementia-friendly:** Designed so that people with dementia can take part with ease and confidence. Also called *dementia-inclusive*.

**Dementia-friendly community:** A neighborhood, town, or city that welcomes and includes people with memory loss.

**Diagnosis:** A diagnosis has 2 parts: a description of your symptoms (such as mild cognitive impairment or dementia), and the name of the disease that is causing your symptoms (such as Alzheimer disease).

**Durable power of attorney (DPOA):** A legal document that gives another person the right to make decisions for you.

**Elder law attorney:** A lawyer who can help you plan for future care needs and finances.

**Frontotemporal dementia (FTD):** A condition caused by damage to the *frontal lobe* and *temporal lobe* of the brain. Symptoms can include changes in personality, language, and social behavior. There may be less memory loss than in other types of dementia.

**General anesthesia:** Drugs that cause a short-term loss of consciousness.

**Genetic:** Inherited.

**Glutamate:** A chemical in the brain that helps with learning and memory.

**Guardian:** Someone who is legally appointed to make healthcare and financial decisions for another person. If someone has *limited guardianship*, it means they can make decisions only in one area, such as only finances. Also called a *conservator*.

**Hallucinations:** When a person can see, hear, smell, taste, or feel something that is not there.

**Lewy body dementia (LBD):** A disease where protein deposits called Lewy bodies build up in the brain. Symptoms include changes in movement, memory, and thinking.

**Mild cognitive impairment (MCI):** A condition where a person has more memory and thinking changes than are expected for their age, but these changes do not interfere with their daily life. Also called *minor neurocognitive disorder*.

**Mixed dementia:** When more than 1 problem causes changes in memory and thinking. For instance, someone with mixed dementia may have both Alzheimer disease and vascular dementia.

**Multidomain:** More than 1 area of memory or thinking is affected.

**Neurodegenerative disease.** A *progressive* disease that causes more brain cell damage over time.

**Neurofibrillary tangles:** In Alzheimer disease, the clumps of a protein called *tau* inside brain cells.

**Placebo:** A substance that does not have a medicinal effect.

**Primary progressive aphasia (PPA):** A type of dementia that affects the ability to communicate.

**Progressive:** When symptoms increase or get worse over time.

**REM behavior disorder:** A condition where you act out your dreams. This disorder may occur with Lewy body dementia.

**Respite care:** Planned or emergency care for someone with special needs. Respite care provides a short break for a family member who is also a caregiver.

**Sleep apnea:** A condition where breathing is disrupted during sleep.

**Seizure:** A sudden change in brain activity. Seizures can cause jerking in the arms or legs, or short-term loss of awareness.

**Tau:** In Alzheimer disease, a protein that builds up inside brain cells to form *neurofibrillary tangles*.

**Vascular dementia:** A condition where brain cells are deprived of food or oxygen. A stroke or damage to small blood vessels in the brain may cause vascular dementia.