

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.