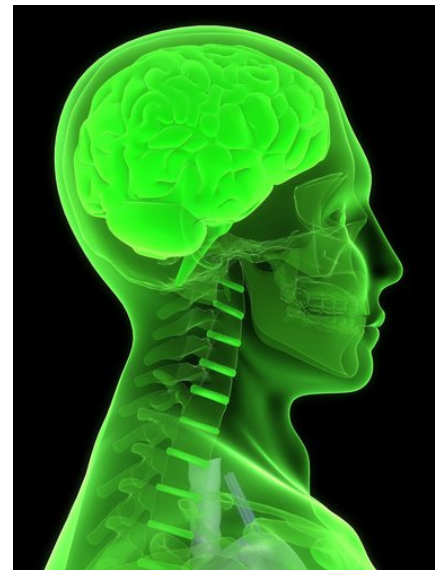


Physiotherapy Newsletter

Alzheimer's Awareness Month

Alzheimer's Disease is a progressive degenerative disease that affects the brains of men and women equally and is most commonly diagnosed in people over 65 years old. Alzheimer's Disease is not caused by stress or hardening of the arteries and is not a normal part of aging. Scientific work is being conducted to determine if family history or environmental factors contribute to the cause of the disease. Alzheimer's Disease is diagnosed through a multitude of tests involving memory, reasoning ability, language and judgement and can be conducted by the Family Doctor, Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Neurologist, Geriatrician, Nurse, Social Worker or Occupational Therapist.



Statistics

- 500 000 Canadians currently have Alzheimer's Disease, 71 000 are under the age of 65
- 1 in 11 seniors currently has Alzheimer's Disease or a related dementia
- Women currently make up 72% of confirmed Alzheimer's Disease cases
- Alzheimer's Disease or a related dementia is expected to affect 50% more Canadians and their families in 5 years
- Alzheimer's Disease represents 64% of all dementias and is expected to increase to 68% by 2034

Alzheimer's Disease Warning Signs: It is important to contact your family physician if you notice any of these symptoms. Please refer to the Alzheimer Society of Canada website for further information.

1. **Memory loss affecting day to day function:** forgetting names and appointments more often and not remembering them later
2. **Difficulty performing familiar tasks:** difficulty performing tasks they have completed every day, such as preparing a meal
3. **Problems with language:** forgetting simple words or substituting words making sentences difficult to understand
4. **Disorientation of place or time:** may become lost on their own street or may not know how to get home
5. **Exhibit poor or decreased judgment:** may wear heavy clothing on a hot day
6. **Exhibit problems with abstract thinking:** may not recognize what the numbers written in cheque books or television listings mean
7. **Misplacing items:** placing items in odd places, ie. sugar dish in the closet
8. **Changes in behaviour and mood:** mood swings for no apparent reason
9. **Personality changes:** becoming confused, suspicious, withdrawn, fearful
10. **Loss of initiative:** may require cues and prompting to participate in activities of daily living

Caregiving Tips for Independent Living:

It is normal for people with Alzheimer's to want to stay independent in their homes for as long as possible. As a caregiver, you can support your family member's independence, safety, and quality of life by:



1. **Creating a safer home environment:** Install secure handrails along stairwell and grab bars in appropriate places, eliminate clutter and remove throw rugs, set temperatures on hot water heater 120 degrees or less, remove toxic substances and/or store in locked cabinet.
2. **Creating a safer kitchen:** Disable oven (remove knobs), cover stove top with aluminium cover, use signs to identify safe objects to use, use small appliances with automatic shut off switches.
3. **Deterring wandering outside:** placing a "stop" sign or "Authorised Personnel Only" on the door leading to the outside, place identification bracelet on person, notify neighbours, provide stimulation and social needs for person during the day.

For further information please contact one of our Occupational Therapists at Limestone Health Consultants (<http://limestonehealth.ca/services-occupationaltherapy.cfm>)