

## What is dementia?

Dementia is a general term for a decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily life. Dementia is not a specific disease. It's an overall term that describes a group of symptoms associated with a decline in memory or other thinking skills severe enough to reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities. Alzheimer's is the most common type of dementia.

## What is Alzheimer's disease?

Alzheimer's is a type of dementia that causes problems with memory, thinking and behavior. Symptoms usually develop slowly and get worse over time, becoming severe enough to interfere with daily tasks. More than 6 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease today, including nearly half a million veterans. Alzheimer's is the sixth-leading cause of death in the United States.

## Know the 10 signs Early detection matters

- ★ Memory loss that disrupts daily life
- ★ Challenges in planning or solving problems
- ★ Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure
- ★ Confusion with time or place
- ★ Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships
- ★ New problems with words in speaking or writing
- ★ Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
- ★ Decreased or poor judgment
- ★ Withdrawal from work or social activities
- ★ Changes in mood and personality

## What to do if you notice these signs

If you notice any of the 10 signs in yourself or someone you know, don't ignore them. Schedule an appointment with your doctor or call our 24/7 Helpline for information and support.

## Help and support for caregivers

As a caregiver, you are not alone. Whether you need information about early-stage caregiving, middle-stage caregiving, or late-stage caregiving, the Alzheimer's Association is here to help. We can connect you to caregiver support groups and community resources, and education to help at each stage of the disease.

## Free community education

If your veteran organization, faith community, or civic group would be interested in a free dementia education program, please contact Program Manager Kelsey Williams at [kewilliams@alz.org](mailto:kewilliams@alz.org) or 615-622-4182. Topics include Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia, the 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's, and Healthy Living for Your Brain and Body.

**The Alzheimer's Association is here to help.  
Call us for reliable information and  
support anytime, day or night.**

**800.272.3900**

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[http://alz.org/tn/helping\\_you/  
military-advisory-council](http://alz.org/tn/helping_you/military-advisory-council)


<sup>1</sup> Kristine Yaffe, M.D. (2010) Archives of General Psychiatry. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Risk of Dementia among U.S. Veterans.

<sup>2</sup> Clifford M. Singer, M.D. Journal of Aging Life Care. (2018). Dementia Risk Factors in Veterans.

<sup>3</sup> The Alzheimer's Association. (2018). Traumatic Brain Injury.

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**Tennessee  
Alzheimer's  
Association Military  
Advisory Council  
(TAAMAC)**





## TAAMAC Task Force

The Tennessee Alzheimer's Association Military Advisory Council (TAAMAC) plans and executes sustainable initiatives focused for military personnel and veterans in our state. An example of some of the initiatives include hosting dementia awareness and education events for veteran organizations, as well as providing support services and information for veterans diagnosed with dementia and their families.

### Organizations represented within TAAMAC include:

- Alzheimer's Association, Tennessee Chapter
- Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Operation Stand Down
- Vietnam Veterans of America
- Montgomery County Veterans Coalition
- Military Officers Association of America
- UT Veterans Success Center

... and others!

Information about the Alzheimer's Military Advisory Council will be regularly updated at: [alz.org/tn/helping\\_you/military-advisory-council](http://alz.org/tn/helping_you/military-advisory-council). To learn more about this group, or to join, please contact Program Manager Kelsey Williams at [kewilliams@alz.org](mailto:kewilliams@alz.org) or 615-622-4182.

## Dementia Risk Factors in Veterans and Military Personnel

Veterans and military members face a greater risk for developing dementia than the civilian population. Emerging research also shows that post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and even more minor neurotrauma associated with military service all significantly increase the risk of developing dementia.<sup>1</sup>

### Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is a chronic and severe anxiety disorder that impacts parts of the brain related to processing memory and emotions. PTSD can occur as the result of exposure to violence, injury, or threat of death or violence, and is common in veterans returning from combat. Individuals diagnosed with PTSD are almost twice as likely to develop dementia, when compared to those without the PTSD diagnosis.<sup>2</sup>

### Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) results from an impact to the head that disrupts normal brain function. TBI may affect a person's cognitive abilities, including learning and thinking skills. Veterans of recent wars have survived serious head injuries in greater numbers than ever before, putting the latest generation of veterans at an increased risk of contracting Alzheimer's. Over the past 30 years, research has linked moderate and severe traumatic brain injury to a greater risk of developing Alzheimer's disease or another type of dementia years after the original head injury.<sup>3</sup>

## What are the benefits of early detection?

- Maximum benefit from available treatment that may provide some relief of symptoms and help maintain a level of independence longer.
- Clinical drug trials help advance research.
- More time to plan for the future and make decisions with dignity.
- Care and support services make it easier to live the best life possible with Alzheimer's or dementia.

### Prevention strategies for veterans and military:

Prevention is key when it comes to mitigating the risks of dementia in veterans and military members. There are behavior and lifestyle changes that people can make to help maintain cognitive health and possibly slow the progression of dementia. Factors such as healthy eating, exercise, mental activities, and heart health promote cognitive functioning and may help people maintain a cognitive reserve after a TBI or PTSD diagnosis, according to Maj. (Dr.) Earl Banning, Director of Neuropsychology at the Wright-Patterson Medical Center.



## Services available for veterans and military:

Veterans and military members who have histories of TBI, PTSD should receive routine, regular screenings for signs of cognitive impairment and mental function. Veterans with dementia who seek care may be eligible for certain dementia care services including in-home care, community-based, outpatient, inpatient acute and long-term care services.

**Are you a veteran or military member experiencing the symptoms of Alzheimer's?**  
We can help. Call the Alzheimer's Association's 24/7 Helpline:

**800.272.3900**