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Brain Matters

May E-Newsletter

May 26, 2009

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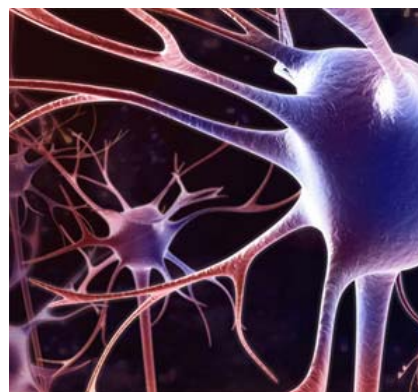
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• **New tool helps predict risk of Alzheimer's in seniors**

A new tool can help predict whether people age 65 and older have a high risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.



Research on the tool is published in the May 13, 2009, online issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

"This new risk index could be very important both for research and for people at risk of developing dementia and their families," said study author Deborah E. Barnes, PhD, MPH, of the University of California, San Francisco, San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Center and member of the American Academy of Neurology. "It could be used to identify people at high risk for dementia for studies on new drugs or prevention methods. The tool could also identify people who have no signs of dementia but should be monitored closely, allowing them to begin treatment as soon as possible, and potentially helping them maintain their thinking and memory skills and quality of life longer."

The risk index is a 15-point scale. People who score eight or more points on the scale are at high risk of developing dementia in the next

10 Signs of Alzheimer's



Memory loss that disrupts daily life is not a typical part of aging.

It may be a symptom of Alzheimer's, a fatal brain disease that causes a slow decline in memory, thinking and reasoning skills. Every individual may experience one or more of these signs in different degrees. If you notice any of them, please see a doctor. Learn how Alzheimer's affects the brain and take the [Brain Tour](#).

1. Memory changes that disrupt daily life

One of the most common signs of Alzheimer's, especially in the early stages, is forgetting recently learned information.

Others include forgetting important dates or events; asking for the same information over and over; relying on memory aides (e.g., reminder notes or electronic devices) or family members for things they used to handle on their own.

What's typical? Sometimes forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later.

2. Challenges in planning or solving problems

Some people may experience changes in their ability to develop and follow a plan or work with numbers. They may have trouble following a familiar recipe or keeping track of monthly bills.

They may have difficulty concentrating and take much longer to do things than they did

six years. Several of the items on the scale are well-known risk factors for Alzheimer's disease, such as older age, low scores on tests of thinking skills, and having a gene that has been linked to the disease.

Other factors predicting dementia risk were more surprising: People who are underweight, do not drink alcohol, have had coronary bypass surgery, or are slow at performing physical tasks such as buttoning a shirt are more likely to develop dementia than people who do not have these risk factors.

[Read more...](#)

- **Can ginkgo biloba prevent memory loss and improve cognitive function in people with Alzheimer's disease?**



Ginkgo biloba, derived from the leaves of the Ginkgo biloba tree, is often touted as a memory aid, but it's still unclear whether ginkgo

biloba can prevent memory loss associated with mild cognitive impairment or Alzheimer's disease.

Small, early studies have shown modest improvements in cognitive function for older adults with dementia. However, a large-scale study, published in a November 2008 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association, found no evidence that ginkgo biloba prevents memory loss or slows the progression of dementia among those who had mild cognitive impairment at the start of the study.

More studies are needed to determine possible benefits and long-term risks of ginkgo biloba. For now, ginkgo biloba is

before.

What's typical? Making occasional errors when balancing a checkbook.

3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure

People with Alzheimer's often find it hard to complete daily tasks.

Sometimes, people may have trouble driving to a familiar location, managing a budget at work or remembering the rules of a favorite game.

What's typical? Occasionally needing help to use the settings on a microwave or to record a television show.

4. Confusion with time or place

People with Alzheimer's can lose track of dates, seasons and the passage of time. They may have trouble understanding something if it is not happening immediately.

Sometimes they may forget where they are or how they got there.

What's typical? Getting confused about the day of the week but figuring it out later.

5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships

For some people, having vision problems is a sign of Alzheimer's. They may have difficulty reading, judging distance and determining color or contrast. In terms of perception, they may pass a mirror and think someone else is in the room. They may not realize they are the person in the mirror.

generally recognized as safe if taken as directed and under the guidance of your doctor. However, bleeding may be a concern when ginkgo biloba is taken with other medications because it may affect the clotting process. Don't use ginkgo biloba if you're taking anti-clotting medications, such as warfarin (Coumadin) or aspirin, or medications that can affect bleeding, such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, others). Consult with your doctor before starting any dietary supplement.

[Read the full article...](#)

• Upcoming Events

1. **May 27, 7 PM**
[Reconnect: Communicating with Persons with Dementia](#)
West University Scout House
6108 Edloe St, Houston
2. **June 9, 6 PM**
[Distant Memories: Normal Aging vs Dementia](#)
First United Methodist Church
1717 Pioneer Ave, Wharton
3. **June 16, 7 PM**
[Bazelides Research Update](#)
Jewish Community Center
5601 S Braeswood Blvd, Houston
4. **June 23, 7 PM**
[Through the Lens of HBO](#)
Jewish Community Center
5601 S Braeswood Blvd, Houston

[Upcoming Events](#)

- **Memory Walk**
Save the Date - Start A Team!



Nationally presented by
Genworth Financial 

What's typical? Vision changes related to cataracts.

[View the entire list.](#)

Quick Links...

- [Chapter Website](#)
- [Add A Leaf to the Memory Tree](#)
- [Schlicting Professional Education Conference - May 1](#)
- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Request A Care Consultation On-Line](#)
- [Shop Kroger & Help the Chapter](#)

Chapter Events

- [Blondes Vs Brunettes Powderpuff Football on May 9](#)
- [Memory Makers Luncheon](#)
- [Houston MEGA Memory Walk on October 24](#)
- [Ft Bend Memory Walk on October 31](#)

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The Alzheimer's Association Memory Walk® is the nation's largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer care, support and research. This inspiring event calls on volunteers of all ages to move to end Alzheimer's.

Locally, over two thousand participants walked in 2008 Memory Walks to raise over \$500,000 for Alzheimer's care, support, and research.

[Register for our 2009 Memory Walks today!](#)

At a Glance:

11 walk locations throughout Southeast Texas 3 miles or less
Walks take place rain or shine
All walks wheelchair/stroller accessible
Entertainment and activities for kids and kids at heart
Dog Welcome at Seven of the Walks!
Remembrance ceremony
Displays from sponsors

To learn more, or sign up, click on the links below:

- [Katy - September 12](#)
- [Center - September 26](#)
- [Lufkin - October 3](#)
- [Nacogdoches - October 10](#)
- [Bay Area/Galveston - October 10](#)
- [N Harris/Montgomery - October 17](#)
- [Houston - October 24](#)
- [Ft Bend - October 31](#)
- [Brazos Valley - November 7](#)
- [Beaumont - November 7](#)
- [Baytown - TBA](#)
- Livingston - TBA



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