

# Diagnosis Fact Sheet

---

Services and guidance physicians may offer to those with Alzheimer's Disease and their families

## Evaluation and Diagnosis

- The physician needs a history from family member(s) about changes over time in the patient's personality, memory, mental functioning speech and language problems, good days and bad days. A journal is especially helpful to the physician.
- Several visits may be necessary if the patient tires easily and if different family members are available to offer their various views.
- Follow-up visits track the progression of the patient's condition over time.
- The initial diagnosis might be "dementia" until the physician is able to see the patient's progress over time and be fairly sure whether it is "Alzheimer's."

**These laboratory tests** can help exclude other disorders, which may look like Alzheimer's:

Complete Blood Count	Thyroid functions	HIV – AIDS test
B12 and folic acid levels	Syphilis blood test	Electrolytes
Serum Calcium	Kidney and liver function	CT brain scan
Chest X-Ray	Medication levels	EKG

Sedimentation Rate – a test for inflammatory conditions such as Lupus

**Detailed testing by a psychologist** with puzzles, games and questionnaires measures brain function and changes over time, and helps distinguish between dementia, mild cognitive impairment (MCI), or other possible causes.

## Care of the Alzheimer's Patient and Family

The physician should be able to:

- Give attention to associated problems (which may be treated) such as depression, Parkinson's, alcohol or drug abuse, nutritional problems, dehydration, strokes, bedsores, and falls.
- Discuss methods of communication.
- Offer suggestions about management of behavioral problems (wandering, aggression, hiding things, paranoia, etc.)
- Suggest changes/modifications to structure of living quarters (simplify, organize, label) and regular schedule for daily activities (eating, sleeping, exercise, medicine).
- Refer families to community resources (support groups, day care, respite care, companions, meals, transport).
- Refer families to legal and financial information (guardianship, durable power of attorney, and long term care insurance).
- Assist with the nursing home decision.

**Alzheimer's Disease Resource Agency of Alaska**

1750 Abbott Rd.

Anchorage, AK 99507

907-561-3313 or

toll-free within Alaska 1-800-478-1080