

# Is it possible to prevent and effectively manage Alzheimer's Disease?



By Minoo Jokhi

A heart touching quote states: "We remember their love when they can no longer remember." Indeed, this is the saddest thing to happen to some elderly folk afflicted with Alzheimer's.

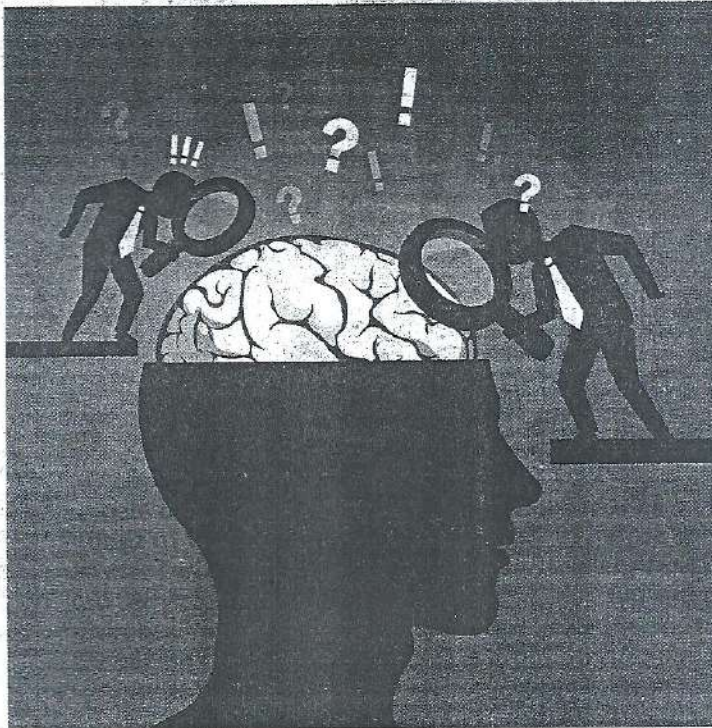
Alzheimer's Disease is a disease that affects the brain and makes victims more and more confused as they grow older. In medical terms, Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia. It is a neurological brain disorder named after a German physician, Alois Alzheimer, who described it 115-years-ago in the year 1906.

Alzheimer's disease is known to mainly target the aged population and it enters very quietly into a person's life. As in many cases, there is no way to reverse the condition and as most patients stay at home the family has to bear the patient's suffering.

Alzheimer Disease also has an adverse effect on memory. Alzheimer's is a brain disease that causes a slow decline in memory, thinking and reasoning skills. Helen Keller had said: "When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one, which had been opened for us."

But when a time comes when all doors are closed and this is the time when we are in a real fix. It is the family that bears the brunt when Alzheimer's hits one of its members. The better the care taken of the patient, the higher the hopes of faster recovery or slower deterioration.

Auguste Deter was the first well known case of Alzheimer's disease. She had a normal life until she was in her 40s. She developed trouble when sleeping, would drag sheets across the house and even scream for hours in the middle of the night. This went for



some time and on November 25, 1901, she was examined by Dr. Alois Alzheimer, who asked her many questions and later asked them again to see how much she could remember.

Dr. Alois Alzheimer asked Auguste to write her name but she was not able to. From there on she suffered more and more and she died rather young on April 8, 1906. More than a century later, her case was re-examined with modern medical technologies, where a genetic cause was found for her disease by some scientists from Sydney.

The results were published in the journal The Lancet Neurology. According to this paper, a mutation in the PSEN1 gene was found, which alters the function of gamma secretase and is a known cause of young onset of Alzheimer's disease.

### Warning Signs

The warning signs and symptoms vary from case to case but by and large the beginning of the problem is forgetfulness. Also other symptoms include difficulties in performing familiar tasks, problems with language, disorientation of time and space, problems

with abstract thinking, decreased judgment, misplacing articles, behavioural mood swings and personality changes.

Imagine that you have a family member who needs to be woken up daily, teeth to be rinsed, bowels monitored, fed painstakingly for hours; may or may not sleep and may weep for no rhyme or reason. Just think how depressing it can be. How sad it can be. Such unfortunate people are avoided by their friends too many a times.

Some warning signs of Alzheimer's disease are as follows:

- 1) Memory loss that disrupts daily life.
- 2) Challenges in planning or solving problems.
- 3) Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure.
- 4) Confusion regarding time or place.
- 5) Trouble understanding visual images properly.
- 6) Problems with words in speaking or writing.
- 7) Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps.
- 8) Decreased or inaccurate judgment.
- 9) Withdrawal from normal work or social activities.
- 10) Mood swings and pe

sonality changing.

### Mind Activity

Always remember, we need to be as creative as possible in life. We need to use our brain and not be always dependent on electronic gadgets such as cell phones and calculators and be as stress-free as we can. Our Parsi grandmas and grandpas are still so active and agile because they can combat stress well.

Some ways to cope up and to the extent possible and try and not ever Alzheimer's get include:

1. Get up 15-35 minutes early. Focus on all tasks on hand instead of being in a mental blur.
2. Say "NO" more often and take time to keep yourself fit.
3. Smile - a sense of humour really helps the brain stay refreshed.
4. Stand up and stretch

as movement is important. Always have a plan "B".

5. Memorize a joke and recall it - this helps build brain muscle.
6. Exercise daily.
7. Get to work early.
8. Get enough sleep; this can vary from individual to individual but if you are sleep deprived your brain is no longer as sharp as it should be.
9. Use time sensibly - it is your most precious asset.
10. Have goal-setting in your daily work schedule.
11. Stretch your memory potential limits a little each day, for e.g. avoid saving all phone numbers in your mobile and instead learn them by heart. I myself remember countless phone and mobile numbers but have only saved my mother's and brother's number in my mobile for emergency use. Every single other number is in my memory. Our memory potential is huge; start exploring it.
12. Visualize yourself as a winner and a person who is mentally sharp and agile.
13. Set priorities in your life.
14. Prepare for the morning the night before.
15. Anticipate your needs.

Yoga and meditation also helps for staving off Alzheimer's as they engage different parts of the brain based on the various components of the practice, which includes Pranayama like Brahmī and Anulom Vilom, various Asanas and different types of concentration exercises. Each of these helps the brain a lot and by doing all this we can surely combat Alzheimer's as well.

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