

Alzheimer Myths - Windows Internet Explorer

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Home > Alzheimer's Disease > What is Alzheimer's? > Myths

Overview

What is Alzheimer's?

Symptoms

Causes & Risk Factors

Stages

Myths

Dementia

Facts and Figures

Quiz

Diagnosis

Treatments

Inside the Brain: An Interactive Tour

Research

Clinical Studies

Publications

Alzheimer Myths

Text Size

Myth 1: Memory loss is a natural part of aging.

Reality: In the past people believed memory loss was a normal part of aging, often regarding even Alzheimer's as natural age-related decline. Experts now recognize severe memory loss as a symptom of serious illness.

Whether memory naturally declines to some extent remains an open question. Many people feel that their memory becomes less sharp as they grow older, but determining whether there is any scientific basis for this belief is a research challenge still being addressed.

Myth 2: Alzheimer's disease is not fatal.

Reality: Alzheimer's disease will kill you. It destroys brain cells and causes memory changes, erratic behaviors and loss of body functions. It slowly and painfully takes away your identity, ability to connect with others, think, eat, talk, walk and find your way home.

Myth 3: Only older people can get Alzheimer's

Reality: Alzheimer's can strike people in their 30s, 40s and 50s. Of the 5 million Americans living with Alzheimer's disease, some 500,000 people under age 65 have Alzheimer's or a related

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Myth 4: Drinking out of aluminum cans or cooking in aluminum pots and pans can lead to Alzheimer's disease.

Reality: During the 1960s and 1970s, aluminum emerged as a possible suspect in Alzheimer's. This suspicion led to concern about exposure to aluminum through everyday sources such as pots and pans, beverage cans, antacids and antiperspirants. Since then, studies have failed to confirm any role for aluminum in causing Alzheimer's. Experts today focus on other areas of research, and few believe that everyday sources of aluminum pose any threat.

Myth 5: Aspartame causes memory loss.

Reality: This artificial sweetener, marketed under such brand names as Nutrasweet and Equal, was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in all foods and beverages in 1996. Since approval, concerns about aspartame's health effects have been raised.

According to the FDA, as of May 2006, the agency had not been presented with any scientific evidence that would lead to change its conclusions on the safety of aspartame for most people. The agency says its conclusions are based on more than 100 laboratory and clinical studies. [Read the May 2006 FDA statement about aspartame.](#)

Myth 6: Flu shots increase risk of Alzheimer's disease

Reality: A theory linking flu shots to a greatly increased risk of Alzheimer's disease has been proposed by a U.S. doctor whose license was suspended by the South Carolina Board of Medical Examiners. Several mainstream studies link flu shots and other vaccinations to a reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease and overall better health.

- A Nov. 27, 2001, *Canadian Medical Journal* report suggests older adults who were vaccinated against diphtheria or tetanus, polio, and influenza seemed to have a lower risk of developing Alzheimer's disease than those not receiving

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