

10 MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE ... AND THE REAL FACTS

Many misconceptions surround Alzheimer's disease. Learn the surprising facts about who gets this disease, how it affects people and what can be done about it.

MISCONCEPTION: Alzheimer's disease only affects "old people."

REAL FACT: The first person discovered to have the disease was only 51. As many as 500,000 Americans under 65 have Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia. Rare, inherited forms of the disease can strike people as young as in their 30s.

MISCONCEPTION: Alzheimer's is only a memory problem. It doesn't kill people.

REAL FACT: Alzheimer's is the seventh leading cause of death in the U.S. The disease first destroys cells in the regions of the brain that are important for memory, but eventually Alzheimer's destroys other brain cells, causing essential body systems to fail.

MISCONCEPTION: Alzheimer's has no symptoms other than memory loss.

REAL FACT: In its final stages, Alzheimer's disease can make muscles rigid and reflexes abnormal. People with Alzheimer's may lose the ability to walk without assistance, smile or even hold their head up.

MISCONCEPTION: Many times, doctors cannot accurately diagnose Alzheimer's.

REAL FACT: A doctor who is knowledgeable about Alzheimer's can almost always correctly diagnose the disease by asking the patient questions, taking a medical history and using various tests.

MISCONCEPTION: Alzheimer's affects a relatively small number of people.

REAL FACT: More than five million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's. That's more than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined.

MISCONCEPTION: Drinking from aluminum cans or cooking with aluminum pots can cause Alzheimer's disease.

REAL FACT: Decades ago, scientists suspected this might be the case, but studies failed to confirm any link between Alzheimer's and aluminum.

MISCONCEPTION: Nothing can be done for a person with Alzheimer's.

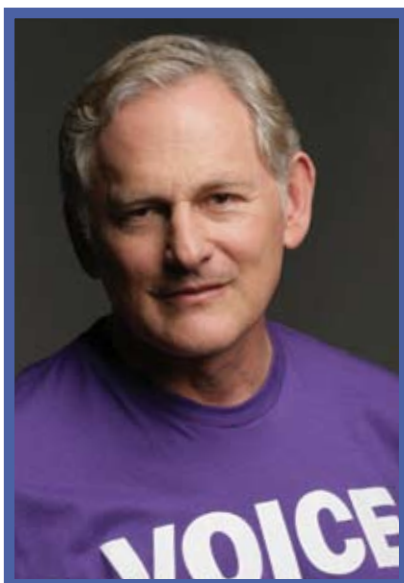
REAL FACT: There is no cure for Alzheimer's. However, medication can relieve some symptoms and delay the decline into the more serious stages of the disease.

MISCONCEPTION: Alzheimer's cannot be prevented.

REAL FACT: No one knows for sure, but the risk of developing Alzheimer's appears to be increased by many conditions that damage the heart and blood vessels, like diabetes and high blood pressure. Therefore, exercise and a low-fat diet, which help prevent heart disease, may also keep the brain healthy.

MISCONCEPTION: Alzheimer's is not a serious financial issue.

REAL FACT: Medicare costs for beneficiaries with Alzheimer's are expected to increase 75%, from \$91 billion in 2005 to \$160 billion in 2010. Unless a cure is found, the prevalence—and cost—of the disease will dramatically escalate as the nation's 78 million baby boomers age.



“Alzheimer's is one of the cruelest diseases. Both my parents died of Alzheimer's, so I lived with its devastating effects for a long time. It's unbearable to not have your mother know who you are. I want people to be aware of what this disease can do to families and what it will do to our health care system.”

Victor Garber, Alzheimer's Association National Advisory Council Member

MISCONCEPTION: You can't do anything to help.

REAL FACT: You can.

You can make a big difference in the fight against Alzheimer's disease in many ways:

- **MOVE** the cause forward—sign up for a Memory Walk happening in your area.
- **OPEN** minds—learn more about Alzheimer's by taking the Brain Tour at www.actionalz.org.
- **VOICE** support—write your Congressperson about the need to accelerate the efforts to find a cure.

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