

IS IT AGING OR ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE?

By Crystal Venetti, Belle Reve Senior Living

When an aging family member begins to forget things, you may begin to question whether it's simply aging or the start of Alzheimer's disease. The Alzheimer's Association has identified 10 warning signs for the disease:

1) Memory loss that disrupts daily life. Memory loss – especially forgetting recently learned information – is one of the most common symptoms. They may forget important dates or events or ask for the same information over and over.

2) Challenges in planning or solving problems. Some may experience difficulty in following a plan or working with numbers. For example, they may have trouble following a recipe or keeping track of monthly bills.

3) Difficulty in completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure. They may have trouble driving to a familiar location, managing a budget at work or remembering the rules of a favorite game.

4) Confusion with time or place. People with Alzheimer's can lose track of dates, seasons and the passage of time. Sometimes they may forget where they are or how they got there.

5) Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships. 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, instead of recognizing themselves.

6) New problems with words in speaking and writing. People with Alzheimer's may have trouble following or joining a conversation. They may struggle with vocabulary, finding the right word or call things by the wrong name.

7) Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps. They may put things in unusual places, lose things and be unable to retrace their steps to find them again. They

may accuse others of stealing.

8) Decreased or poor judgment. They may use poor judgment when dealing with money, giving large amounts to telemarketers, for example. They may pay less attention to their grooming habits.

9) Withdrawal from work or social activities. People with Alzheimer's may start to withdraw from hobbies, social activities, work projects or sports and may also avoid being social.

10) Changes in mood and personality. They may become confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful or anxious. They may be easily upset, even in familiar places among friends and family.

If your loved one is exhibiting some or many of these symptoms, make an appointment to visit with their doctor for an accurate diagnosis. I also invite you to stop by Belle Reve Senior Living at 404 East Harford Street in Milford to visit our Memory Care neighborhood. Our staff is experienced in caring for people with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.