



PAD TESTING

Determining Your Risk for Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and Dementia.

Debilitating and Devastating

We all expect our physical health to gradually decline as we age. And though it may be difficult, it's still a natural part of life that is relatively easy to accept. However, when physical decline is coupled with the cognitive decline of dementia, it can be utterly devastating. Not only is the loss of memory and reasoning skills debilitating, but it is also excep-

tionally painful for family members and loved ones. Dementia itself is not a specific disease, but rather a term given to a number of debilitating neurological conditions that result in memory loss and a significant decline in cognitive and reasoning abilities. The most common cause of dementia is Alzheimer's followed by Parkinson's.

Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease is estimated to currently affect about [5.8 million Americans](#), or 1 of every 10 people over the age of 65. And it's not just older adults who are affected. Approximately 200,000 adults under the age of 65 are also affected. [Alzheimer's accounts for 60-80% of all dementia cases.](#)

Alzheimer's is a progressive disease that worsens over time. As a result, a person will typically live 4 to 8 years after being diagnosed, but may live up to 20 years or more, depending upon other health factors. It is the 6th leading cause of death in the US.

In its early stages, the memory loss from Alzheimer's is mild. However, as it progresses, individuals may lose their ability to carry on a conversation, and eventually, the ability to respond to their environment.

Parkinson's Disease

Like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's is also a degenerative neurological disorder that worsens over time. [It's estimated](#) that about one million Americans suffer from Parkinson's, a little over 1% of the population over 60.

Parkinson's differs from Alzheimer's in that it affects an individual's motor function rather than just their cognitive abilities. Individuals with Parkinson's are likely to experience tremors, difficulty moving or walking, dizziness and fainting, and [a host of other symptoms.](#)

Generally, a person with Parkinson's can be expected to live a normal lifespan, although this may be

impacted by the onset of dementia symptoms. Dementia occurs in individuals with Parkinson's about 50-80% of the time, commonly in the latter stages of the disease.

Other Kinds of Dementia

Beyond Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, there are numerous conditions that also bring about dementia-like symptoms. Some are very common, such as Vascular Dementia, which is brought on by a stroke and is thought to account for as [much as 20% of all dementia cases.](#)

Other common kinds of dementia include Lewy Body Dementia, which is often misdiagnosed as Alzheimers, and Frontotemporal Degeneration (FTD), which tends to affect people around the age of sixty with Alzheimer's-like symptoms minus the memory loss.

Less-common types of dementia are caused by rare conditions like [Huntington's Disease](#), [Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease](#), and [Wernicke-Korsakoff Syndrome.](#)

What Can Be Done?

Although patients suffering from these afflictions can be treated, there are no known cures. Treatment options currently include drug and cognitive therapies that may help extend or delay the progression of dementia. However, the efficacy of these kinds of treatment options declines sharply as the disease progresses. So the earlier a disease like Alzheimer's is detected, the more effective treatment will be.

Unfortunately, the nature of these diseases often makes it difficult to detect. Individuals experiencing memory loss may hide their symptoms from friends or loved ones out of embarrassment until they are no longer able to do so. They may even forget that they tend to forget.

To make matters worse, the loss of reasoning and cognitive function that comes with dementia may impact an individual's ability to choose treatment or to resolve their affairs. If detected too late, dementia sufferers can no longer be considered legally capable of making decisions or creating a will.

Determining Risk

Although it is not currently possible to stop or reverse the course of dementia in those it afflicts, it is possible to learn about one's risk factors long before any symptoms might arise.

A simple genetic evaluation called PAD (for Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and Dementia) Testing can inform you of any likelihood that you might develop these diseases. PAD Testing evaluates a person's genetic makeup in search of certain mutant genes (called "alleles") that are linked to dementia-causing conditions.

Not only can PAD Testing indicate whether risk exists for an individual, it may also reveal unforeseen risks in a person's offspring, as they may or may not share the same genetic traits.

It's important to note that PAD Testing cannot tell for certain whether a person will actually develop

Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, or dementia. It can only determine if a person is at risk of doing so. This allows an individual to be wary and vigilant for potential symptoms. It can also help them make arrangements for treatment or legal affairs before any potential symptoms are able to jeopardize their ability to do so.

How to Get Tested

Generally, genetic tests like PAD are not covered by health insurance. However, if a medical professional determines that you are at substantial risk due to your family medical history, he or she may prescribe a PAD test that may be covered by insurance, depending upon your plan.

Because the benefit of advanced knowledge is so high, it is recommended that anyone with a family history of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, or other dementia should speak to their doctor about getting tested.

It is also recommended that you share the results of your PAD test with your doctor. Although there are no cures now, new therapies and treatments are always being developed.



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