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Warning Signs: Alzheimer's Disease

The warning signs of Alzheimer's disease include:

- Asking the same question repeatedly.
- Repeating the same story, word for word, multiple times.
- Forgetting how to perform everyday tasks such as cooking, making basic repairs, paying bills or balancing a checkbook.
- Getting lost in familiar surroundings, or misplacing household objects.
- Neglecting to bathe or repeatedly wearing the same clothes, while insisting they have bathed and their clothes are still clean.
- Relying on someone else, such as a spouse, to make decisions or answer questions they previously would have handled themselves.

If a loved one is exhibiting some or most of these symptoms, it does not mean that the person definitely has Alzheimer's disease. Have the person thoroughly examined by a medical specialist trained in evaluating memory disorders, such as a neurologist or psychiatrist. 

This article was reviewed by Timothy L. Hagen, D.O., Neurology.

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Noninvasive Echo Test Saves Lives

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. A noninvasive test called an echocardiogram is useful in the detection and management of many types of heart disease, to help people live longer and improve their quality of life.


An estimated 10 million echocardiograms are performed in the United States each year. An echocardiogram is an ultrasound test used to look at everything from how heart valves are functioning to how well the heart is pumping blood. "The test can be performed on patients ranging from newborns to senior citizens," said Technical Specialist Thelma Lasko, who is a registered diagnostic cardiac sonographer and radiologic technologist in the Aultman Echocardiography Lab.

Echocardiograms have a wide range of uses. The test results from stress echocardiograms help physicians diagnose patients with chest pain and monitor heart activity after patients have been treated for heart attacks. "The tests are also helpful for people with congestive heart failure. We can determine if a patient's heart walls are not pumping in sync and if a pacemaker will help," Lasko explained. "The pacemaker will get the walls of the heart chambers pumping together. In some cases, we can get people out of congestive heart failure."

Physicians rely on the sonographers performing the echocardiograms to capture quality images of heart function and disease processes. "Sonographers and physicians work closely together," Lasko said. "The sonographers' interpretive and technical abilities determine the accuracy of each echocardiographic exam."

Approximately 500 patients turn to Aultman for echocardiograms each month. "Sonographers have to be detectives," Lasko offered. "You may have a vague patient history or find something you didn't suspect. You have to investigate everything because each patient is different. That is what keeps the job exciting."

The Aultman Echocardiography Lab is the area's only facility with an entire staff of Registered Diagnostic Cardiac Sonographers (RDCS). "Preparing for the RDCS test is a two-year process," said Lasko, who is also a pediatric-registered sonographer. "The steps include anatomy, physiology and physics college courses, along with six months of clinical rotations here at Aultman."

The Aultman Echocardiography Lab is accredited by the Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Echocardiography. Accreditation is based on a facility's operating procedures, quality assurance program, patient volume, reporting processes and much more. Accreditation signifies a laboratory's dedication to excellence. 

This article was reviewed by Carlos Fabre, M.D., Cardiology.



Echo Lab staff members are Registered Diagnostic Cardiac Sonographers.

Men and Depression

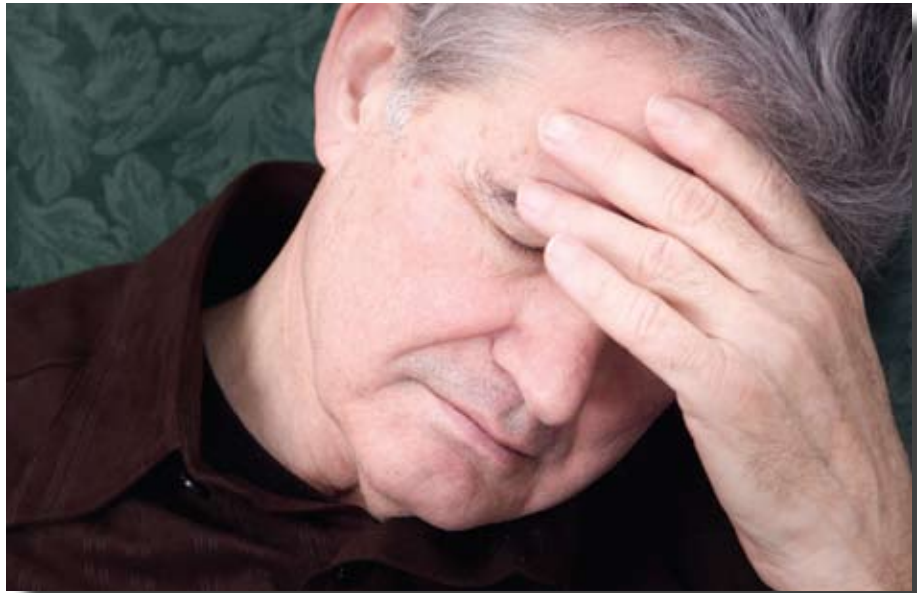
Men and women can develop similar symptoms of depression such as low self-esteem, changes in appetite, fatigue, sleep disturbances and loss of enthusiasm for once pleasurable activities. However, men often experience depression differently than women and have different ways of coping.

Symptoms of male depression may include:

- Losing weight without trying
- Loss of concentration
- Lack of energy and motivation
- Isolation from family and friends
- Loss of interest in work, hobbies and sex
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Misuse of prescription medication
- Noticeable changes in sleep and appetite patterns
- Thoughts of suicide

Undiagnosed Depression

Depression in men often goes undiagnosed. Some men may feel that their symptoms aren't severe enough to seek treatment – and they should “tough out” the physical and emotional pain of depression.



When seeing their health-care professionals, men are more likely to focus on physical complaints instead of their emotional problems. As a result, depression may be overlooked. Even if men are diagnosed with depression, they may resist treatment because they worry about the stigma of mental-health issues.

Depression and Suicide

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, men take their own lives at nearly four times the rate of females. Men represent nearly 80 percent of all U.S. suicides – with men 75 years and older having the highest suicide rate.

Although women *attempt* suicide more often than men do, men are

more likely to *complete* suicide – partly because they have a tendency to use more lethal means such as guns.

Treatment

Depression – for both men and women – is a treatable illness. The first step to getting help is a physical examination to rule out other possible causes for the symptoms. Next, the doctor should conduct a diagnostic evaluation for depression or refer the patient to a mental-health professional for this evaluation. Depending on the type of depression, treatments may include antidepressant medication, psychotherapy or a combination of the two.▲

This article was reviewed by Michael Rich, M.D., Psychiatry.

Diabetes and Dental Care

Diabetes can cause many health complications, including problems with teeth and gums. Your teeth are covered with plaque, which is a sticky film of bacteria. After you consume starchy foods or sugary beverages, the bacteria release acids that attack tooth enamel. Repeated attacks can cause the enamel to break down, resulting in cavities.

When diabetes is not properly controlled, high glucose levels in saliva may help bacteria thrive. Brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and flossing at least once daily will help remove decay-causing plaque.

Plaque that is not removed can eventually harden into tartar. When tartar collects above the gumline, it becomes more difficult to thoroughly brush and clean between teeth. This can create conditions that lead to chronic inflammation and infection in the mouth.

The most common oral health problems associated with diabetes are:

- Tooth decay
- Gum disease
- Salivary gland dysfunction
- Fungal infections
- Taste impairment

If you're diabetic, it is important to let your dentist know that you have the disease. Advise your dentist if you have experienced changes in your medical condition and if the diabetes is under control.



Periodontal disease is often linked to the control of diabetes. For example, patients with poor blood-sugar control appear to develop periodontal disease more often and more severely – and they lose more teeth than people who maintain good control of their diabetes. Gum and dental infections can worsen diabetic control as well.

Because of lowered resistance and a longer healing process, periodontal diseases often appear to be more frequent and more severe among diabetics. That is why good maintenance of blood-sugar levels, a well-balanced diet, proper oral care at home and regular dental checkups are important. [▲](#)

This article was reviewed by Charles Smith, M.D., Endocrinology.

Preparing for Surgery



Mentally and physically planning for surgery are important steps in helping achieve successful results. Here are some tips to help you prepare for surgery:

Find a surgeon you trust.

It's important to feel comfortable with your surgeon. Learn about his or her specialties, volumes of procedures performed and surgical results.

Educate yourself.

Ask your doctor about the details of your surgical procedure, and talk to others who have had the same procedure done. Weigh the risks and benefits of having surgery. Ask your doctor what you need to do to prepare for surgery, such as stopping medications prior to the procedure, and learn what to expect during recovery.

Plan ahead.

If possible, schedule the surgery when you can afford time away from work and when it will be least disruptive to your family. Get organized by taking care of business in the weeks prior to surgery. If you will need home medical equipment during recovery and rehabilitation, make arrangements in advance.

Be positive.

While it's perfectly normal to experience increased anxiety as your surgery date approaches, try to maintain a positive attitude. Do your part to ensure a good outcome, such as following your doctor's pre- and post-operative instructions and rehabilitation plan.

Eat healthy.

Take multivitamins and eat well-balanced meals in the weeks and months prior to surgery, to promote the healing of your surgical wounds.▲

This article was reviewed by Todd A. Meyerhoefer, M.D., Surgery.

Pack a Healthier Lunch: How to Limit Fat and Calories

Packing a lunch instead of eating out every day may seem like a good way to save money and calories. But even homemade sandwiches can contribute to a bulging waistline. Here are some suggestions to limit calories when packing your lunch:

- Choose low-fat or fat-free lunch meats and cheeses, or select lean meats such as chicken or turkey.
- Try whole-wheat breads, bagels, English muffins, tortillas and pitas. Choose those that have three grams or more of fiber per serving and no hydrogenated fats.
- Make a sandwich or a pita stuffed with fresh vegetables, low-fat cheese and a fat-free condiment such as mustard.
- Use low-fat or fat-free mayonnaise when making chicken or tuna salad sandwiches.
- Top salad greens with leftover chicken, lean beef or pork, chickpeas, kidney beans, egg, tuna, salmon, cheese, sunflower seeds, almonds or walnuts.
- Eat hummus as a vegetable or low-fat cracker dip.
- Stock up on fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Cut up fresh fruits, and mix with low-fat or nonfat plain or vanilla yogurt.
- Try using all-natural or reduced-fat peanut butter.
- Munch on small servings of dried fruits and nuts.
- If you need something crunchy to go with your sandwich, pack crisp veggies, baked chips/tortillas or pretzels instead of traditional potato chips.
- Keep graham crackers or small bran muffins handy.▲

This article was reviewed by Marcella A. Martell, MS, RD, LD, from Aultman Weight Management.

Protecting Children From the Flu

The flu (influenza) is an infection of the nose, throat and lungs that is caused by influenza virus. Many people confuse “flu” with gastroenteritis, which may include vomiting and diarrhea. Gastroenteritis is not caused by influenza virus.

The flu can spread from person to person. Most people with the flu are sick for about a week but then feel better. However, flu can be serious – even deadly – for people such as young children, pregnant women, seniors and people with chronic health problems.

People who have the flu usually cough, sneeze and have a runny nose. This makes droplets with the flu virus in them. Other people can get the flu by breathing in these droplets or getting them in their nose or mouth.

To protect your children from the flu, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that all children from the ages of 6 months to 5 years get a flu vaccine every fall or winter.

In addition to having your children vaccinated, you can take everyday steps to prevent the spread of germs. Remind your kids to:

- Cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing – and then discard the tissue after use.
- Wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. If water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Germs often spread this way.
- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Get plenty of sleep, drink water, stay physically active and eat good food to help them stay healthy all year long.

If your child gets sick despite these precautions, consult your doctor. Make sure your sick child gets ample rest and drinks plenty of fluids. Visit the doctor right away if your child has a high fever that lasts a long time, experiences trouble breathing, has skin that looks blue, is not drinking enough, seems confused or groggy or gets better and then worse again. ▲

AULTMAN IMMEDIATE CARE



If your child needs medical attention for the flu, minor illness or injury, turn to Aultman Immediate Care. Here are the locations and times for immediate care services:

Aultman North

Immediate Care Hours:
8 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily
6100 Whipple Ave. N.W.
North Canton, Ohio 44720
330-305-6999

Aultman West

Immediate Care Hours:
8 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily
2021 Wales Ave. N.W.
Massillon, Ohio 44646
330-834-1111

Aultman Carrollton

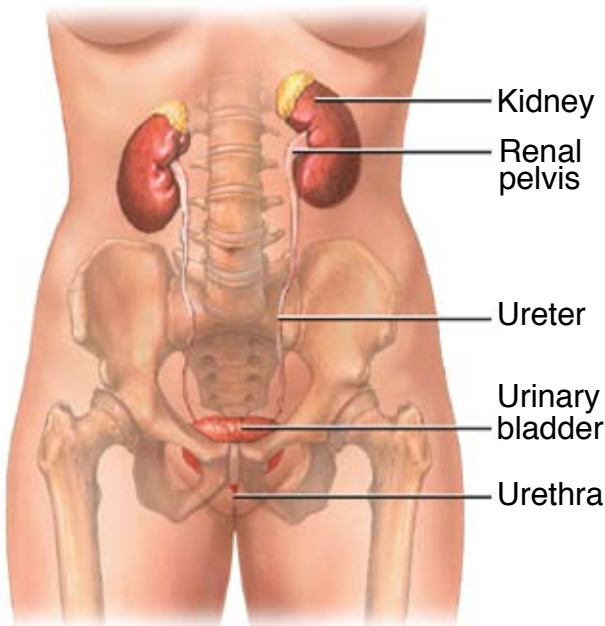
Immediate Care Hours:
11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday-Friday and
9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on weekends and holidays
1020 Trump Road
Carrollton, Ohio 44615
330-627-0091

This article was reviewed by Beth A. Marcinkoski, M.D., Pediatrics.

Urinary Tract Infections

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are caused by bacteria that invade the urinary system and multiply. The infection can occur in any part of the urinary system, but it usually starts in the urethra (a tube that carries the urine out of the body).

Most UTIs arise from E coli bacteria living in the colon. In women, since the rectum and urethra are fairly close to each other, the bacteria can migrate into the urethra. This makes women more prone to UTIs than men.



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Risk Factors

UTI risk factors include:

- Gender (female)
- Being sexually active
- Using a diaphragm for birth control
- Menopause
- Diabetes
- Kidney stones
- Enlarged prostate
- Weak immune system
- Abnormalities of the urinary system
- Paraplegia
- Sickle-cell anemia
- History of kidney transplant
- Bladder catheter in place or recent instrumentation of the urinary system

Symptoms


UTI symptoms include a frequent and urgent need to urinate, while passing only a small amount of urine. Symptoms may also include pain in the abdomen or pelvic area, bad-smelling urine, nausea and poor appetite.

Diagnosis and Treatment

The doctor will ask about your symptoms and perform a physical exam. A sample of your urine will be tested for blood, pus and bacteria. Children and men who develop UTIs may require additional testing, as structural abnormalities of the urinary system may predispose them to infection.

UTIs are treated with antibiotic drugs. The choice of antibiotic and length of treatment depend on your infection's severity and your personal history.

Prevention

To keep bacteria out of the urinary tract, drink plenty of liquids. Urinate when you feel the need, instead of resisting the urge. Empty your bladder completely, and drink a full glass of water after having sex. Take showers instead of baths. If you are a woman, always wipe from the front to the back after having a bowel movement. 

This article was reviewed by Vasant Betkerur, M.D., Urology.

Seniors' Health: Low Back Pain

Low back pain has many causes, including natural “wear and tear” that coincides with aging. While you cannot turn back the clock to prevent back disorders, try these tips to help you avoid back pain.

Stay Fit

Regular exercise helps prevent back pain by strengthening your back and abdominal muscles. Low-impact activities that offer the benefits of exercising without placing your back at undue risk include bike riding, swimming and walking. Exercising at least three times a week is helpful if you tend to have ongoing episodes of mild to moderate low back pain.

Maintain a Healthy Weight

By maintaining a healthy weight, you can ease the burden on your spine. If the bulk of your weight comes from abdominal fat, your center of gravity can shift forward and put added pressure on your back. In addition, being overweight or obese can slow your recovery from back trouble – and increase the risk that your back pain will return.

Kick the Habit

It's no secret that smoking increases your risk of heart disease and lung cancer. But did you know that smoking can jeopardize your back as well?

Nicotine in cigarettes may contribute to low back pain in two ways. First, nicotine hampers the flow of blood to the vertebrae and disks, which impairs their function and may trigger back pain. Second, smokers are at greater risk for osteoporosis and associated back pain because they tend to lose bone mass faster than non-smokers do.▲

This article was reviewed by Gust Pantelas, M.D., Family Medicine.



Taking Antibiotics Properly

Antibiotics, also known as antimicrobial drugs, are medications that fight infections caused by bacteria. Antibiotics are not effective against viruses that cause the common cold, bronchitis and flu.

Sensitive bacteria are killed every time a person takes antibiotics – but resistant germs may be left to grow and multiply. Repeated and improper uses of antibiotics are primary causes of the increase in drug-resistant bacteria.

Here are some suggestions on how to use antibiotics properly:

- To prevent overuse of antibiotics, only take them for bacterial infections.
- If your health-care provider determines that you do not have a bacterial infection, ask about ways to help relieve your symptoms.
- Take your antibiotic exactly as prescribed, and always finish your prescription.
- Never take antibiotics prescribed for someone else.

Widespread use of antibiotics promotes the spread of antibiotic resistance. The key to controlling the spread of resistance is the smart use of antibiotic medication.▲

This article was reviewed by Gust Pantelas, M.D., Family Medicine.

