



Research

Many studies all over the country are looking at drugs and other substances that may be possible treatments for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Many people and agencies are involved in these studies like the government, drug companies, and the national Alzheimer's Association. These studies are looking at factors that may increase the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease such as aging, family history, genetic causes, previous head injury, and low education levels.

The following links talk about exciting and promising new developments in the fight against Alzheimer's.

Genetic Studies

These studies look at families where Alzheimer's disease runs generation to generation. They study social factors that may influence disease. These studies may help us find out what puts someone at risk and how to develop a truly good screening tool.

Neurotransmitter Studies

These are chemicals that help nerve cells talk to one another. When someone gets Alzheimer's disease one neurotransmitter, acetylcholine, is reduced. By trying to find out why this happens and how to prevent may hold a cure.

Drug Studies

Nefiracetam-this drug is in a clinical trial to see if it can help improve memory and functional ability in patients with Alzheimer's.

Ampalex-this drug is in a clinical trial to see if it can help improve memory in patients with Alzheimer's.

Melatonin-this drug is in a clinical trial to see if it can help improve sleep problems in patients with Alzheimer's.

Vioxx/Naproxen-these drugs are in a clinical trial to see if it can help delay memory decline in patients with Alzheimer's.

Estrogen-this drug is in a clinical trial to see if it can delay the onset of memory loss in elderly women patients with Alzheimer's who also have family members with the disease.





Lower rates of Alzheimer's disease exist in women who have gone through menopause and are taking hormone replacement therapy. They also found that the brains of women taking hormones have greater circulation that means better blood flow.

B-amyloid-this clinical trial is evaluating the effectiveness of a vaccine that breaks down abnormal proteins that build up in the brains of Alzheimer patients.

Statins-these drugs are usually prescribed for people with high cholesterol. Experts believe they can prevent Alzheimer's leading many to believe there is a relationship between your cholesterol level and your risk for getting Alzheimer's.

Ginkgo Biloba-this is an extract from the ginkgo tree. It has been studied as a memory booster. However its claims as prevention for Alzheimer's has not been proven in studies.

Folate-can lower levels of an amino acid believed to increase the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

What's In the News?

"Use it or Lose it" Theory

Scientists believe using your brain will help prevent or delay you from getting Alzheimer's disease. When you work out problems like math or riddles this stimulates parts of the brain that are susceptible to changes that eventually can lead to Alzheimer's disease.

"Alzheimer's Antibody"

Scientists at the University of South Florida have discovered an antibody that seems to reduce two major characteristics of Alzheimer's disease. The research team is trying to stop the immune system from being triggered and prevent inflammation to areas of the brain. They think by preventing inflammation that sometimes kills good brain cells they can prevent Alzheimer's disease. The other characteristic they are trying to prevent is the development of the abnormal proteins-amyloids. If this research continues to be fruitful, a vaccine to prevent amyloid protein development may be an outcome.

"Chromosome 12"

Scientists at Harvard and Massachusetts General Hospital are continuing previous work that has identified chromosome 12 as predisposing someone to develop late stage





Alzheimer's disease. The exact gene responsible has not been located yet.

"MRI Identification"

Researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston are using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to detect clinical changes in healthy elderly brains that could mean they will develop Alzheimer's. By identifying individuals who have no symptoms yet but will later, drug treatments can be given earlier with better chance of slowing down mental changes like memory loss.

"Nerve Growth factor"

Researchers at Salk Institute in California are studying growth factors that help the brain reduce age-related shrinking of brain tissue and also helps produce acetylcholine. The research team has special cells called fibroblasts that release the growth factors into the brain tissue. These fibroblasts are grafted directly into the person's brain.

