

Listening 1

Kind: captions What is Alzheimer's disease? Alzheimer's is a slow fatal disease of the brain, affecting 1 in 10 people over the age of 65. No one is immune. The disease comes on gradually as to abnormal protein fragments called plaques and tangles accumulate in the brain and kill brain cells. They start here, in the hippocampus the part of the brain where memories are first formed. Over many years' time the plaques and tangles slowly destroy the hippocampus and it becomes harder and harder to form new memories. Simple recollections from a few hours or days ago, that the rest of us might take for granted, are just not there. After that more plaques and tangles spread into different regions of the brain killing cells and compromising function wherever they go. This spreading around is what causes the different stages of Alzheimer's. From the hippocampus the disease spreads here to the region of the brain where language is processed. When that happens, it gets tougher and tougher to find the right word. Next the disease creeps toward the front of the brain where logical thought takes place. Very gradually a person begins to lose the ability to solve problems, grasp concepts and make plans. Next the plaques and tangles invade the part of the brain where emotions are regulated when this happens the patient gradually loses control over moods and feelings. After that, the disease moves to where the brain makes sense of things it sees, hears, and smells. In this stage Alzheimer's wreaks havoc on a person's senses and can spark hallucinations. Eventually the plaques and tangles erase a person's oldest and most precious memories which are stored here in the back of the brain. Near the end the disease compromises a person's balance and coordination and in the very last stage, it destroys the part of the brain that regulates breathing and the heart. The progression from mild forgetting to death is slow and steady and takes place over an average of eight to ten years. It is relentless and for now incurable. Helping your family, friends and neighbors to better understand Alzheimer's will reduce stigma, improve care and even help the fight for a cure. Thanks for helping to do your part