

# Health Trends

## Is It Normal Aging Or Something More Serious?

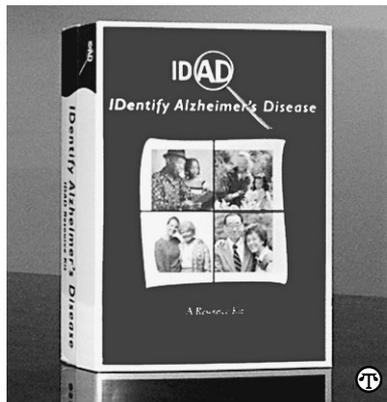
(NAPSA)—Television personality Linda Dano knows how difficult it can be to tell the difference between normal aging and signs of Alzheimer's disease (AD). In the 1980s, Dano noticed that her father had become increasingly forgetful and started showing changes in his behavior and personality. At first she thought her father was frustrated about getting older and that's why he was acting strangely. Like many people, Linda didn't know that his symptoms were the early signs of Alzheimer's disease.

"Dad suffered with Alzheimer's disease for years, but we didn't know what it was until he was in the severe stages of the illness," said Dano.

Unfortunately, Linda's story isn't unique. A recent national survey found that most people are unable to tell the difference between the early symptoms of AD and normal aging. In addition, more than 70 percent were unaware of treatments available to help delay the progression of disease symptoms. These findings suggest that although much more is known about AD today, people still don't know as much as they should.

### Symptoms To Watch For

"People need to know that treatment in the early stages of the illness offers the best chance of successfully delaying Alzheimer's disease symptoms," said Steven Potkin, MD, a professor of psychiatry at the University of California, Irvine. "Treatments are available now that can help patients function



**Free "IDentify Alzheimer's Disease (ID.A.D.) Resource Kits" are available by calling toll-free 877-439-3566 or visiting [www.nfcacares.org](http://www.nfcacares.org).**

better than they otherwise would. This can mean more time for enjoying hobbies, such as playing cards, traveling and staying active in community groups. It is critical to see a doctor at the very first sign."

According to Dr. Potkin, warning signs include:

- Saying the same thing or asking the same question repeatedly
- Getting lost easily
- Losing interest in favorite activities
- Having difficulty in naming common items
- Losing things more often than normal
- Showing personality changes such as withdrawal, confusion and suspicion

Because many of these symptoms can be signs of other condi-

tions ranging from nutritional deficiencies to depression, it's important to be examined by a doctor for a proper diagnosis.

Currently, there is no cure for AD. But there are medications known as cholinesterase inhibitors that are available to treat many of the symptoms of mild to moderate AD. Only a doctor can tell if a treatment, such as Exelon® (rivastigmine tartrate), is right for individual patients.

### Free Kit to Send For

In response to the survey findings, Dano has teamed with the National Family Caregivers Association to develop an "IDentify Alzheimer's Disease (ID.A.D.) Resource Kit" that is sponsored by Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation.

Free "ID.A.D. Resource Kits" are available by calling toll-free 877-439-3566 or visiting [www.nfcacares.org](http://www.nfcacares.org). The kit contains educational materials, such as a video, a memory questionnaire and informational brochures specifically for family caregivers.

"By not detecting Alzheimer's disease early and taking appropriate action, people may be losing precious time with their loved ones," said Dano. "I want people to learn from my experience and get information so that this disease can be identified earlier and patients and caregivers can get the help they need. That would have made a world of difference to my family and me."

*Note to Editors: EXELON® (rivastigmine tartrate) is approved for mild to moderate AD. EXELON use is associated with significant stomach-related side effects, including nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and weight loss. If therapy is interrupted for longer than several days, treatment should be reinitiated with the lowest daily dose in order to avoid the possibility of severe vomiting and its potentially serious consequences. In clinical studies, stomach-related side effects occurred more frequently as doses were increased. The weight loss associated with EXELON occurred more commonly among women receiving high doses in clinical studies. Because these side effects can be serious, caregivers should be encouraged to monitor for these adverse events and inform the physician if they occur. People at risk for certain heart conditions or stomach ulcers should notify their doctors before starting EXELON therapy. In clinical studies, some patients also experienced fainting, weakness and upset stomach. For more information, please see complete prescribing information at [www.AlzheimersDisease.com](http://www.AlzheimersDisease.com). EXL9718*