



Wellington Parc

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Causes of Alzheimer's Disease

No one yet knows exactly what causes Alzheimer's disease. Understanding its underlying mechanisms will provide the basis for advances in all other areas of research, including diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and care. In the last year alone, much has been learned about factors that may contribute to the onset of Alzheimer's:

- Significant findings from key studies have improved our understanding of plaques and tangles in the brains of individuals with Alzheimer's disease and eventually may lead to the development of treatments to slow the effects of the disease process.
- Discovery of a previously unknown lesion characteristic of Alzheimer's disease may lead researchers to further understand the disease process and how intervention therapies may be designed. This lesion, called AMY plaque, may play a role in the onset and progression of Alzheimer's.
- Studies of the inflammatory processes of the brain and the role of oxidative stress in Alzheimer's disease have led to preliminary indications of the beneficial use of anti-inflammatories, such as ibuprofen, and antioxidants, such as vitamin E, in treating or slowing the progression of the disease.
- Several other lines of ongoing research may lead to a deeper understanding of the processes that take place in the Alzheimer brain. These include research into:
 1. Genetic factors related to onset of the disease
 2. Beta amyloid protein and senile plaques and their role in the disease process
 3. Tau protein and neurofibrillary tangles and their role in the disease process
 4. The role of estrogen in the brain
 5. Neurotransmitter deficiencies and dysfunction in brain cell communication
 6. Inflammation and its effect on brain cell activity
 7. Oxidative stress and its effect on brain cell processes