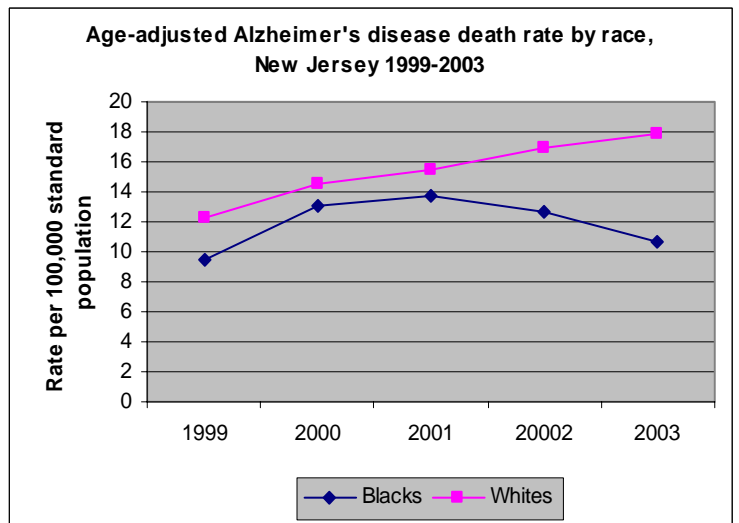
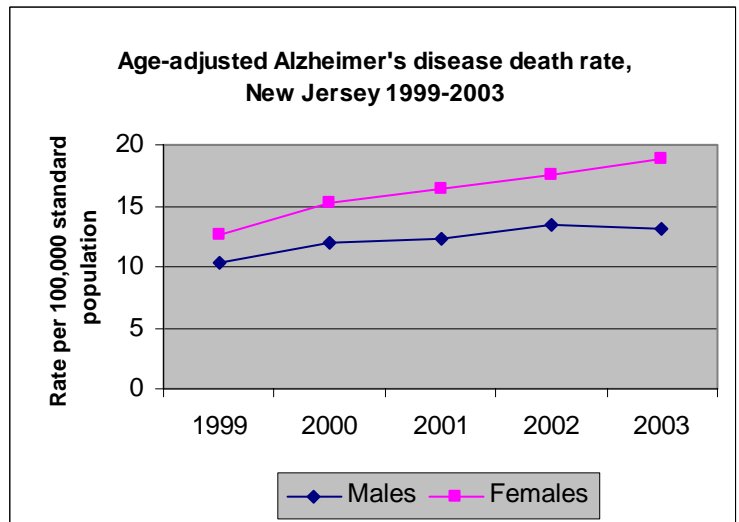




## HEALTH DATA FACT SHEET February 2007

### Alzheimer's disease

- Alzheimer's disease (AD) is an age-related and irreversible brain disorder that develops over a period of years. AD is one of a group of disorders, termed dementias, which are characterized by cognitive and behavioral problems. Dementia is a brain disorder that seriously affects a person's ability to carry out daily activities. AD is the most common form of dementia among older people and eventually leads to death.
- Scientists estimate that 4.5 million people currently have the disease, and the prevalence doubles for every 5-year age group beyond age 65. The disease usually begins after age 60, and the risk increases with age. Younger people may have AD but it is much less common. About 5 percent of men and women ages 65-74 have AD, and nearly half of those aged 85 and older may have the disease. However, it is important to note that AD is not a normal part of aging.
- In 2003, 1,636 New Jersey residents died due to Alzheimer's disease, as compared with 1,041 in 1999.
- Women are 2.8 times more likely than men to die from Alzheimer's disease (1207 vs. 429).
- Alzheimer's disease is listed as the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death among New Jerseyans in 2003, but it is thought to be underestimated as a cause of death due to failure to diagnose the condition and judgment that the condition did not contribute to death.
- About 63 percent of all people in New Jersey who die from AD are 85 years or older.
- The age-adjusted death rate for AD is higher for whites than for blacks (17.9 vs. 10.7).
- White women are at the highest risk of dying from AD with an age-adjusted death rate of 19.9 per 100,000 population.
- AD progresses slowly, starting with mild memory problems and ending with severe brain damage. Generally, AD patients live from 8 to 10 years after diagnosis, but the disease can last for as many as 20 years.
- Scientists do not fully know what causes AD. There probably is not one single cause, but several factors affecting each person differently. Age is the most important known risk factor for



AD. Family history is another risk factor. Also there is scientific evidence that some of the same risk factors for heart disease and stroke, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and low levels of the vitamin folate, may also increase the risk of AD.

- The only definitive way to diagnose AD is to determine whether there are plaques and tangles in the brain tissue. This cannot be done until an autopsy is performed, so a diagnosis of AD is always considered “probable” based on medical history, neuropsychological tests, brain scans, and medical tests to rule out any other possible diseases.
- There are drugs that may prevent some symptoms from worsening for a short time for patients in the early and middle stages of AD. There are some drugs to help control some of the behavioral symptoms of the disease, which can make patients more comfortable. There is currently no cure for AD.
- The New Jersey Division of Aging and Community Services, within the Department of Health and Senior Services, offers an Alzheimer’s Adult Day Services Program for residents who meet the necessary eligibility requirements.
- There are two local chapters of the Alzheimer’s Association for New Jersey residents with AD and their families. The association offers various services such as support groups, help lines, education and it also helps fund current research.

For further information: [Alzheimer’s Association](#)  
[National Institute on Aging](#)

For more information on New Jersey’s Alzheimer’s Adult Day Care Program:  
<http://www.state.nj.us/health/senior/alzheimer.shtml>

For more information on local chapters of the Alzheimer’s Association: <http://www.alz-delawarevalley.org/> (Southern counties) or <http://www.alznj.org/> (Northern and Central counties)

For information on geriatric mental health services in New Jersey: <http://www2.umdnj.edu/~coyne/copsa.html>

Sources:

National Institute of Health  
[Alzheimer’s: General Information](#)  
[Alzheimer’s Disease: Fact Sheet](#)

National Institute on Aging, [Alzheimer’s Disease Education and Referral Center](#)  
[Clinical Trials](#)

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services  
[Division of Aging and Community Services](#)  
[Center for Health Statistics](#), New Jersey 1999-2003 Multiple Cause of Death Files, unpublished data



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