

Mayo Clinic Minute

How Alzheimer's disease affects personality

Video	Audio
Vivien Williams	Watching a loved one's personality change because of Alzheimer's disease is not easy.
Ronald Petersen, M.D., Ph.D. Director Mayo Clinic Alzheimer's Disease Research Center	"Many times, when people develop Alzheimer's disease, their personality traits sort of become exaggerated. So if they're a genuinely nice person and have been quite affable throughout most of their life, that continues into the disease process."
Vivien Williams	But Dr. Ronald Petersen says, sometimes, the disease can completely change someone's personality.
Ronald Petersen, M.D., Ph.D.	"Occasionally, it happens that people do a 180 – that is, the nice, little old grandmother throughout her whole life develops the disease and then starts talking like a sailor later on in life using words that she had never used throughout her life."
Vivien Williams	The question is why? It may be related to the part of the brain that's affected.
Ronald Petersen, M.D., Ph.D.	"If the disease process tends to affect, say, the frontal lobes of the brain, the frontal lobes are involved in our behaviors, our personalities, our right and wrong, inhibition, disinhibition. If that part of the brain becomes affected, then all of those features, all of those behaviors, start to change."
Vivien Williams	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Vivien Williams.