

factsheet

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Alzheimer's: America's Sixth Leading Cause of Death

Alzheimer's disease is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States and the only cause of death among the top 10 without a way to prevent, cure or even slow its progression.

- In 1998, Alzheimer's was the 12th leading cause of death. By 2007, it had risen to the sixth.
- In 2008, over 80,000 Americans died of the disease.
- Between 2000 and 2008, annual deaths from Alzheimer's increased 66 percent, while the overall death rate in America increased less than three percent.

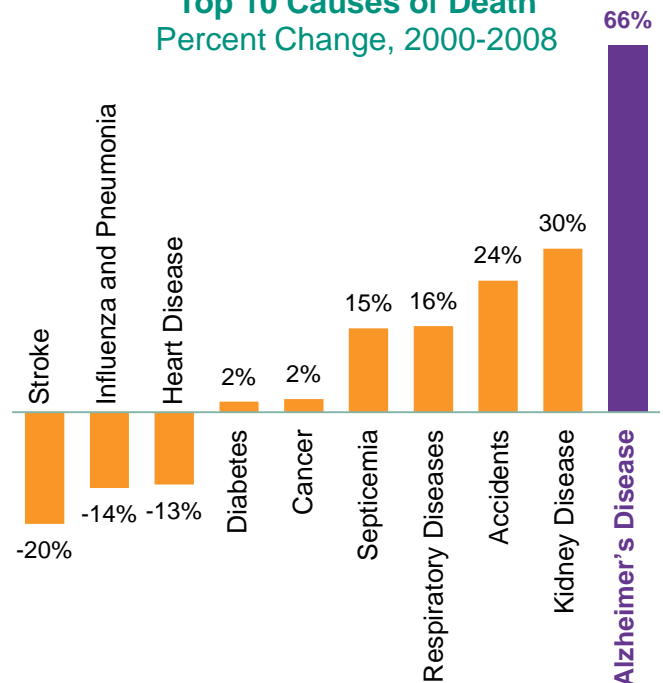
The rate of increase in deaths from Alzheimer's disease has far outpaced the rate of increase in deaths for the other nine leading causes.

- From 2000 to 2008, deaths from three of the ten leading causes of death decreased.
- From 2000 to 2008, deaths from seven of the ten leading causes of death increased – but the rate for Alzheimer's is by far the greatest.

Top 10 Causes of Death

1. Heart Disease	6. Alzheimer's Disease
2. Cancer	7. Diabetes
3. Respiratory Diseases	8. Influenza and Pneumonia
4. Stroke	9. Kidney Disease
5. Accidents	10. Septicemia

Top 10 Causes of Death
Percent Change, 2000-2008



Despite its ranking, Alzheimer's disease as an underlying cause of death is underreported.

- While this has improved in recent years, the underreporting continues, as noted in a 2009 article in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.
- How dementia leads to death may create ambiguity about the underlying cause of death. For example, complications from severe dementia can significantly increase the risk of developing pneumonia – the most commonly identified cause of death among elderly people with Alzheimer's.