

Problems managing money may surface shortly before Alzheimer's disease sets in

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New research finds poor money management skills may indicate that a person with mild memory problems will soon develop Alzheimer's disease. The study is published in the September 22, 2009, print issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

The study involved 76 older people with no [memory problems](#) and 87 older people with mild [memory problems](#) but no symptoms of dementia, known as [mild cognitive impairment](#) (MCI). The participants were given a money management test at the beginning of the study and then again after one year. The test included tasks of counting coins, making grocery purchases, understanding and using a checkbook, understanding and using a bank statement, preparing bills for mailing, and detecting fraud situations.

After one year, 25 of the 87 people with MCI had developed Alzheimer's type dementia. The study found that while those people with no memory problems and those with MCI who did not develop dementia scored higher initially and maintained the same scores a year later, the scores of those people with MCI who developed [dementia](#) were lower initially and dropped by nine percent on checkbook management abilities, and six percent on overall financial knowledge and skills during the same period.

"Our findings show that declining money management skills are detectable in patients with MCI in the year prior to developing [Alzheimer's disease](#)," said study senior author Daniel Marson, JD, PhD,

with the Department of Neurology and Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

"Doctors should proactively monitor people with MCI for declining financial skills and advise them and their caregivers about steps they can take to watch for signs of poor money management," said Marson.

"Caregivers should consider overseeing a person's checking transactions, contacting the person's bank to find money issues such as bills being paid twice, or become cosigners on the checking account so that both signatures are required for checks written above a certain amount. Online banking and bill payment services are also good options."

Source: American Academy of Neurology ([news](#) : [web](#))

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