

Genetics

Alzheimer disease

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Informative genetic testing is currently available to only a small number of families with a history of early-onset (younger than 60 years of age) Alzheimer disease (AD). For these families, the benefits of genetic testing are limited and are mainly related to the individual's perception of the psychological advantages of knowing whether or not he or she is predisposed to develop AD. There remains no cure or effective preventive therapy for AD.

Bottom line. Genetic testing is not feasible for most cases of AD at this time. Apolipoprotein E gene variations alone cannot be used to predict future disease occurrence. Rare families with a history of early-onset AD might be eligible for genetic testing, while families with multiple relatives affected with late-onset AD (60 years of age and older) might be eligible to participate in AD research studies.

The complete *Gene Messenger—Alzheimer Disease* by the GenetiKit research team is available on **CFPlus**.^{*} Past Gene Messenger articles can be accessed on-line at www.cfp.ca. On the home page, click on **Collections** in the left-hand menu, then click on **Genetics**.

Competing interests

None declared

The **GenetiKit** research team, a group of family physicians, genetic counselors and geneticists, designed the Gene Messenger series to provide practical information to help family physicians and their patients make informed choices about rapidly emerging genetic discoveries. The series is a collection of up-to-date, definitive, short reviews on genetics topics that have made headlines, and offers recommendations regarding referral for genetic services or testing.

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GENE MESSENGER

For more information on genetics topics,
 see www.mtsinai.on.ca/FamMedGen/



^{*}The Gene Messenger on Alzheimer disease is available at www.cfp.ca. Go to the full text of this article on-line, then click on **CFPlus** in the menu at the top right-hand side of the page.