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Your Late-Onset Alzheimer's Disease report results explained

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I'm Dr. Richard Isaacson, a neurologist specializing in Alzheimer's disease prevention and treatment.

I've spent over 15 years working on Alzheimer's because for me it's personal – Alzheimer's has affected several members of my own family.

With that perspective in mind, I'd like to help you dive a little deeper into your report.

This report covers late-onset Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of the condition, which typically develops after the age of 65.

Alzheimer's is most often characterized by progressive short-term memory loss, a decline in thinking or reasoning skills, and changes in mood and sleep.

To determine your result, this report looked at one specific location in your DNA, for a variant called APOE e4.

Although scientists don't yet know exactly how the APOE e4 variant works, it is associated with an increased risk for late-onset Alzheimer's disease.

Based on your genetic result, you have one copy of the e4 variant, which is not uncommon; more than 25% of people in the United States have at least one copy of this variant.

People with this result have a slightly increased risk of developing late-onset Alzheimer's disease, but most people with this result will not develop the condition.

In the general population, about 11-14% of people may develop Alzheimer's disease by the age of 85. For people with your genetic result, it's estimated that up to 20-30% may develop Alzheimer's by age 85.

But if we look at the disease risk in younger people – up to age 75 – the risk goes down to 4-7%. This means that out of 100 people with your genetic result, 93 to 96 are NOT expected to develop Alzheimer's by age 75.

If you'd like more details about these risk estimates, please take a look at the Scientific Details section of the report.

And remember – this report doesn't diagnose Alzheimer's or any other health condition.



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When it comes to Alzheimer's risk, we do know that the e4 variant is just one piece of the puzzle.

Family history can play an important role; if a close family member has been diagnosed with late-onset Alzheimer's disease, then a person may be more likely to develop the condition.

High blood pressure, high cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes are also associated with an increased risk, so it's important to try to keep your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar at healthy levels.

Scientists have also found that eating a heart-healthy diet – with lots of green leafy vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and healthy fats like fish and olive oil – may reduce Alzheimer's risk.

Staying physically and mentally active may also help reduce risk, so try to stay active through activities like regular exercise (which is extremely important), as well as walking, reading, and learning new things – like a new language or a musical instrument.

To summarize, because you have one copy of the e4 genetic variant, you have a slightly increased risk of developing late-onset Alzheimer's disease.

But there are several things that you can do that may reduce your risk, including keeping your heart healthy and staying physically and mentally active.

If you have additional questions about your report, I encourage you to read the Frequently Asked Questions section, and if you have specific concerns about your personal risk, please consider speaking with a healthcare professional, such as a doctor or genetic counselor.