

## Aging dogs can help us understand Alzheimer's disease

Every 67 seconds someone in the United States is [diagnosed](#) with Alzheimer's disease and [new estimates](#) suggest that it may be the third leading cause of death of older people.

Old dogs may teach us a great deal about aging. As dogs get older, some develop learning and memory problems, much like we do.

When aged dogs show cognitive changes not caused by other systemic illnesses, they are related to brain changes that are strikingly similar to people. For example, old dogs develop senile plaques in their brains that are made of a protein that is identical to one that humans produce.

Unlike mice and rats, old dogs naturally develop significant brain pathology like we see in people. In this way, aging dogs may resemble aging humans in a more natural or realistic way than mice with genetic mutations.

There are many other changes in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease that are similar in aging dogs. These include changes in the blood vessels of the brain, the accumulation of damaged proteins and losses in cells, and chemicals that support cells in the brain. These changes may be modified by lifestyle factors.

**Read full, original story:** [What can beagles teach us about Alzheimer's disease?](#)