

We could soon have a blood test for Alzheimer's

Approximately 5.5 million Americans over the age of 65 cope with [Alzheimer's disease]. Symptoms include behavioral changes, cognitive difficulties, and mood swings: these could indicate a number of different illnesses, so many people don't know for sure what they are battling.

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After [a hunt that's lasted nearly 20 years](#), a wave of new research now promises a sea change. Researchers have identified reliable, blood-based biomarkers of disease, thanks to more automated and sensitive detection techniques.

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[A] promising marker is a protein named neurofilament light (NFL). NFL is released from [neurons damaged by injury](#), concussions, multiple sclerosis, or neurodegenerative conditions, including AD. Increasing nerve damage of any kind causes its levels in the blood to increase, so it's not specific to AD, but it is useful as a relative marker to track how a person's disease is progressing, says Michelle M. Mielke of the Mayo Clinic.

NFL is an "excellent candidate" biomarker that's further along in development for this purpose than the amyloid peptide ratio and tau markers that are specific to AD, Mielke says. But it's difficult to pinpoint a single marker as the best candidate for a blood test: "It depends on the context of use—some may be better for diagnosis and others to track disease progression or response to a drug."

Read full, original post: [A blood test for Alzheimer's disease draws near](#)