

YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE...NOW WHAT?

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More and more people are getting diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease each day. In fact, **every 71 seconds someone in the United States develops Alzheimer's disease**. Many leave the doctor's office feeling shocked, ashamed, depressed, frightened or lost, and are unsure where to turn for help, support, and guidance.

While there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's disease, treatments are available that may help relieve some symptoms. Research has shown that **taking full advantage of available treatment, care, and support can make life better**. The Alzheimer's Association is a good resource.

For support, turn to the **Alzheimer's Association Helpline (800) 272-3900**. The 24-hour helpline provides support, information and assistance, phone counseling and education on Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. Calling links family caregivers, professionals, persons with dementia, and care partners to available community resources and support 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Planning for the future is very important in making life better for persons with Alzheimer's disease and their care partners. Advanced planning enables persons with Alzheimer's disease to make their wishes about legal and financial issues as well as medical care and living arrangements known. Knowing what to expect can ease the minds for all concerned.

There are many more resources available within the Alzheimer's Association.

There are a variety of specialized **support groups** for family members and persons in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. These formal gatherings are made up of caregivers, family, and friends who come together to discuss issues pertaining to Alzheimer's disease. The purpose of support groups is to enable open dialogue and to provide emotional support, as well as to facilitate the exchange of coping techniques – all in a safe and supportive environment.

A variety of **caregiver education** seminars are offered which are designed to provide families, health care professionals, and the general community with valuable information about Alzheimer's disease and other related dementia. Knowledgeable speakers, informative discussions, and literature help to dispel myths and alert you to the newest research trends.

Counseling and care management is also available. One-on-one counseling sessions are designed to meet the needs of the caregiver, as well as individuals diagnosed with early-stage dementia. Education, coping strategies, effective communication, problem solving, behavior management, and planning for the future are topics that are often addressed in counseling.

Care management includes comprehensive assessment of needs; creating a plan of care; coordinating appropriate referrals; and follow-up. Together, the caregiver and counselor work to design a mutually agreed upon list of prioritized steps to positively impact and address their own needs as well as those of the person with Alzheimer's disease.

Feeling stressed and/or burned out? **Respite services provide relief** to persons who are caring for individuals with Alzheimer's disease. The purpose is to reduce caregiver stress while the person with Alzheimer's disease receives companionship and individualized activities, aiming to maintain their optimum level of functioning. This service is available through adult day programs or in the person with dementia's home.

The **Alzheimer's Association's Medic Alert + Safe Return Program®** is a 24-hour nationwide identification and support program that works with national law enforcement agencies to assist in the safe and timely return of persons with dementia. It is comforting to know that 89% of persons enrolled in Medic Alert + Safe Return® are found within 4 hours of their disappearance and 98.9% of persons enrolled in the program are found within 24 hours of their disappearance. Registrants receive identification products that are inscribed with the toll-free crisis number and alert others that the individual is memory-impaired and may need assistance. Caregiver identification jewelry is also available to alert others that the individual provides care for a person registered in Safe Return.

Finally, **it is very important to practice person-centered care**, which is care that focuses on each individual with respect to his or her unique history, abilities, experiences, culture, and personality. People with dementia retain the ability and the right to communicate their likes, dislikes, and preferences. Each person with dementia has his or her own personality, needs, and wishes, so please take the time and make the effort needed to know the person as an individual so that her unique individuality is honored.

Please turn to the Alzheimer's Association for guidance, information, and support:
1-800-272-3900.