

“Mom Has Alzheimer’s. Now What?”

When your loved one is diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease, many questions come to mind. First is the question “**Is there a cure?**”

Unfortunately, there is no cure for Alzheimer’s disease. However, there are drugs that may improve or stabilize symptoms. In addition, there are care strategies that may minimize or prevent behavioral problems. Learning more about these treatments and knowing what questions to ask your loved one’s doctor can help you through this difficult and confusing time.

New drugs are under development that offer hope for Alzheimer’s patients, and clinical trials test whether these treatments are safe and effective.

Your loved one’s physician will give you more information about treatment options and clinical trials that may be right for your loved one. You can also find out more on the Internet. The resources listed in this brochure are a great place to start. You may also want to visit www.aboutalz.org to watch animated short films that answer many of the questions you may have about this disease.

When talking to your loved one’s physician, the National Family Caregivers Association suggests preparing your questions ahead of time so you can make the most of your appointment. If you have lots of things to talk about, make a consultation appointment so the doctor can allow enough time to meet with you in an unhurried way. For a doctor’s visit checklist, visit www.thefamilycaregiver.org/pdfs/DrCrgvrComm.pdf.



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Resources for Caregivers

Alzheimer’s Disease: Helping Yourself Help A Loved One



“I Don’t Have Time To Read This”

Take a minute. Sit down.

As a family caregiver of someone with Alzheimer’s disease, you have a lot on your plate. There’s so much to learn about, so much to plan, so much to worry about. But you need to read this guide—not only for the person you’re caring for, but for *yourself*.

Caring for someone with Alzheimer’s is a stressful job. It’s an emotional roller coaster of love, hope, anger, guilt, loneliness, and sadness. You will have to make tough decisions and consider questions you’ve never thought about before: What are my responsibilities towards my parent? How can I take Mom or Dad out of their home of 50 years? What does it mean to be in a marriage “in sickness and in health”? How can I balance my relationship with my loved one with the other relationships in my life?

Caring for someone with Alzheimer’s changes your life. In fact, caring for someone with a dementing disease such as Alzheimer’s is typically more stressful than caring for someone with only a physical impairment. Many family caregivers—up to 47 percent, according to one study—experience depression. You will need help keeping yourself whole as your loved one needs more and more from you.

But you are not alone. Help is available—right in your own community. This brochure will introduce you to some of the issues you will face as a caregiver and will show you where you can find help.



“Mom Needs So Much Help Now. It Seems Like All I Ever Do Is Take Care of Her.”



As your loved one's disease progresses, he or she will need more care from you than ever. Caregiving may seem to consume all the energy you have. At these times, it is critical to remember your own health needs. If you get sick, who then will provide care? **Consider these tips from the National Family Caregivers Association:**

- 1) Caregiving is a job and respite is your earned right. **Reward yourself** with respite breaks often.
- 2) **Watch out** for signs of depression, and don't delay in getting professional help when you need it.
- 3) When people offer to help, **accept the offer** and suggest specific things that they can do.
- 4) **Educate yourself** about Alzheimer's and how you can communicate effectively with physicians.
- 5) There's a difference between caring and doing. **Be open** to technologies and ideas that promote your loved one's independence.
- 6) **Trust your instincts.** Most of the time they'll lead you in the right direction.
- 7) Caregivers often do a lot of lifting, pushing, and pulling. **Be good to your back.**
- 8) Alzheimer's can change a person into someone you barely recognize. Grieve for your losses, and then allow yourself to **dream new dreams.**
- 9) **Seek support** from other caregivers. There is great strength in knowing you are not alone.
- 10) **Stand up for your rights** as a family caregiver and a citizen. Your stories are so compelling. Together they can move mountains. Tell them to people with the power to make a difference.
- 11) **Be proud.** It is not uncommon for caregivers to feel guilty—but there is no need. You are doing a really hard job and you are doing it the best way you can.

“I Just Can't Take It Anymore. What Am I Going to Do?”

Many caregivers become overwhelmed by the strain of caring for a person with Alzheimer's disease and experience stress, illness, sleep deprivation, premature aging, and depression. In fact, a study of caregiver health revealed that elderly spousal caregivers who experienced caregiver strain had a mortality risk that was 63 percent higher than that of control subjects.

10 Signs of Caregiver Stress

Be aware of the Alzheimer's Association's "10 Signs of Caregiver Stress," and talk to your own physician if you experience any of these:

- Denial** about the disease and its effect on the person who's been diagnosed
- Anger** at the person with Alzheimer's or others, anger that no cure exists, and anger that people don't understand what's going on
- Social withdrawal** from friends and activities that once brought pleasure
- Anxiety** about facing another day and what the future holds
- Depression** that begins to break your spirit and affects your ability to cope
- Exhaustion** that makes it nearly impossible to complete necessary daily tasks
- Sleeplessness** caused by a never-ending list of concerns
- Irritability** that leads to moodiness and triggers negative responses and reactions
- Lack of concentration** that makes it difficult to perform familiar tasks
- Health problems** that begin to take their toll, both mentally and physically



Forming Your Support Network

There are many people and resources out there that can help you through this difficult time. They include family and friends, support groups, in-home nursing care, day centers, health care providers, and residential facilities. Unfortunately, it isn't easy to find the right combination of people and services to be your support network. Don't get discouraged. Be sure to reach out and talk with others who know what you are going through and who have "walked in your shoes." You don't have to do it alone.

Helpful Resources

Start to create your support network list by learning about the organizations and resources below. For a more comprehensive list visit the Alliance for Aging Research's website at www.agingresearch.org.

Physicians and Healthcare Providers

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
www.caremanager.org
 (520) 881-8008

This organization can help you locate a geriatric care manager (GCM) in your area. GCMs are professionals that specialize in helping elderly people deal with social problems.

Respite Care Services

Eldercare Locator
www.eldercare.gov
 (800) 677-1116

The Eldercare Locator, a public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging, connects you with your local Area Agency on Aging and local respite care services.

Support for Caregivers

Alzheimer's Association
www.alz.org
 (800) 272-3900 (toll-free)
The Alzheimer's Association can connect you with local support groups. You can also find people to talk to through the Association's on-line chat rooms and message boards.

Alzheimer's Foundation of America
www.alzfdn.org/services/index.shtml
 (866) 232-8484 (toll-free)
Through their free hot-line, the Alzheimer's Foundation can connect you with social workers and other Alzheimer's disease professionals.

ElderCare Online
www.ec-online.net
This website provides an online community where peers and professionals focus on quality of life issues.

National Family Caregivers Association
www.thefamilycaregiver.org
 (800) 896-3650 (toll-free)
By visiting the NFCA website or calling their toll free number, you can find tips, newsletters, and a guide to national and local resources for caregivers.

Use this page to fill in the contact information for your support network

Friends and Family

NAME _____	PHONE _____
NAME _____	PHONE _____
NAME _____	PHONE _____
NAME _____	PHONE _____

Physicians/Healthcare Providers

NAME _____	PHONE _____
NAME _____	PHONE _____
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NAME _____	PHONE _____

Respite Care Services

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NAME _____	PHONE _____
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Support for Caregivers

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Other

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