

# A Caregiver's Guide for **ALZHEIMER'S**



# WHAT IS ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE?



A progressive disease that slowly reduces memory, thinking skills, and eventually the ability to carry out activities of daily living.

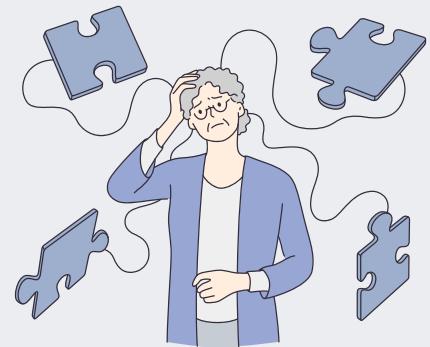
## What is known about Alzheimer's Disease?

Although there has been extensive research, scientists do not fully understand what causes Alzheimer's disease. Multiple factors can affect each person differently.

- The best-known risk factor for Alzheimer's disease is age.
- Scientists believe that family history plays a significant role in the development of Alzheimer's disease.
- Living a healthy lifestyle may help reduce the risks of developing Alzheimer's disease.

## Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

- Mood & Personality change
- Increased anxiety and/or aggression
- Problem recognizing family and friends
- Memory loss
- Repeating questions
- Decreased and poor judgement



Visit <https://www.adrcinc.org/> for more information .  
For inquiries call 631.580.5100 or email [Info@ADRCinc.Org](mailto:Info@ADRCinc.Org)



# How Alzheimer's is Diagnosed:

Alzheimer's can be diagnosed in different ways. The most common way is through a doctor's exam.

Doctors must conduct various tests assessing memory impairment, functional abilities, psychological evaluations and interviewing family members. This is done so that they can identify behavior changes and rule out other conditions.



## Diagnosing Alzheimer's: What to Expect



### Assessing Cognitive Abilities

Your doctor may conduct mental status testing to assess your cognitive and memory skills.

Your doctor may refer you to a neuropsychologist; they are trained in brain and mental health conditions.



### Laboratory Test

Your provider will order a series of laboratory tests to rule out other disorders that can cause similar symptoms.

Many doctors recommend a cerebrospinal fluid exam. This test looks at the ratio of amyloid and tau proteins to help determine whether Alzheimer's is present.



### Brain Imaging Test

Alzheimer's is the degeneration of brain cells which can often be seen in brain scans. Brain scans alone are not sufficient to make a diagnosis due to overlaps. Brain imaging can help rule out other causes like brain tumors or strokes and help identify different types of degenerative brain disease.

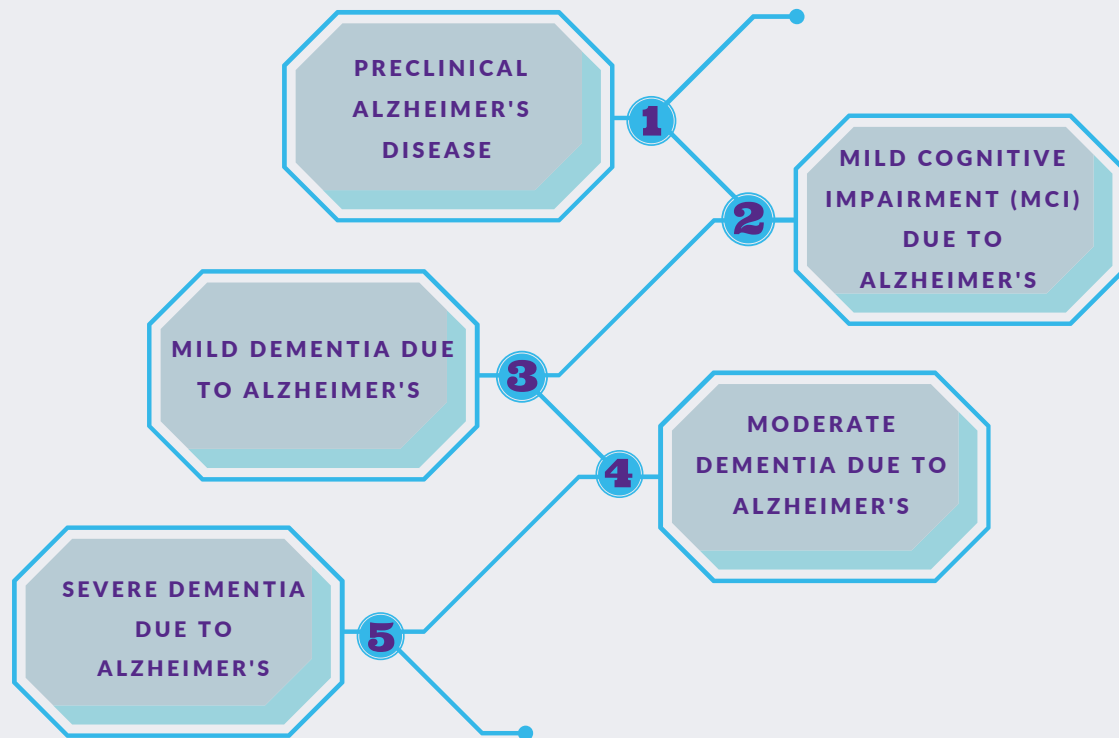
The different types of brain scans are Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computerized tomography (CT), and positron emission tomography (PET).



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# 5 STAGES OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE PROGRESSION

The Mayo Clinic has extensively researched Alzheimer's disease and its progression. These five steps were created to help understand what might happen as each person has different experiences with Alzheimer's



1. Alzheimer's can begin years before noticing any symptoms, and many people won't notice symptoms during this stage. With the help of new imaging technologies, it can help identify the amyloid-beta protein, which indicates Alzheimer's disease. Identifying these proteins early on creates an essential advantage in clinical trials and development for future treatments.
2. Individuals with mild cognitive impairment experience mild changes in their thinking and memory ability. People with MCI often have memory lapses during regular conversations or have trouble judging the time needed to complete a task. People with MCI don't always have Alzheimer's disease.
3. Alzheimer's is usually diagnosed during the mild dementia stage. At this point, it becomes clear to family members and doctors that the individual is experiencing trouble with their memory, which impacts their daily activities. Often in this stage, people may experience changes in personality, memory loss of recent events, misplaced belongings, and difficulty completing tasks and expressing emotions.
4. During moderate dementia, people often show increasingly poor judgment and confusion, need more assistance in daily activities, and increase memory loss. Individuals during this stage may also become agitated and restless and have outbursts of aggressive behavior.
5. The late stage of Alzheimer's is called severe dementia, as mental function continues to decline, and the disease significantly impacts physical abilities. At this stage, people often lose the ability to communicate clearly and require assistance with personal care, such as going to the bathroom and eating.





# ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE STATISTICS

The Alzheimer's Association conducted a statistical report using U.S data related to Alzheimer's disease. With the data provided, they addressed morality, morbidity, prevalence, caregiving, costs of healthcare, and so much more.

## PREVALENCE

As the aging population continues to grow, so does the number of Americans living with Alzheimer's. By 2060, the number of people aged 65 & older with Alzheimer's dementia is estimated to reach 14 million.

- Alzheimer's disease is now a significant public health concern due to the lack of awareness, stigmatization, and barriers regarding diagnoses and care for individuals with Alzheimer's and other dementias.



Census Population Projections Program, 2014 to 2060

For more information:  
<https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia>

As the disease progresses, it can become more challenging to navigate, which is why **ADRC has committed to providing care, support, and educational programs for families in need and those coping with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.**

# MORE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE STATISTICS

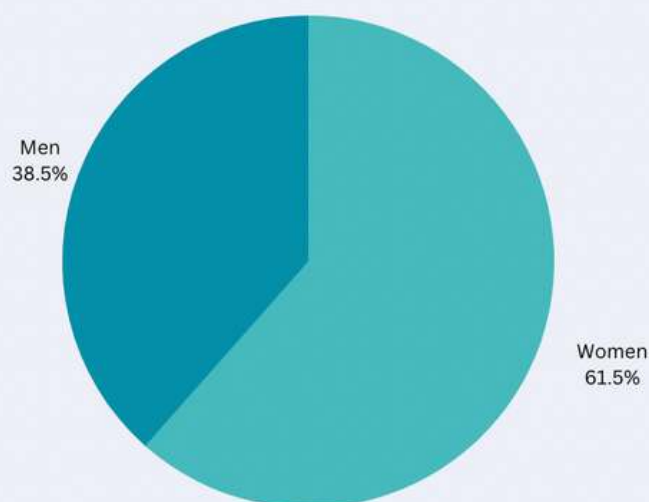
Racial and Ethnic Differences  
in Adults Older than 65 with  
Alzheimer's/ and Dementias



1 in 9 age 65 and  
older has  
Alzheimer's



Alzheimer's is Twice as Common  
in Women Compared to Men:



## MORTALITY & MORBIDITY

- Alzheimer's disease is the 6th leading cause of death in the U.S.
- Alzheimer's is also the leading cause of disability and poor health in older adults.
- Between 2000 and 2019, the death rate from Alzheimer's disease increased at the following ages:**
  - For ages 65 to 74, a 22% increase
  - For age 75 to 84, a 51% increase
  - and for ages 85 and older, there was a 78% increase



**1 in 3 seniors** dies with Alzheimer's or another dementia. It kills more than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined.

For more information:  
<https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia>



# Caregiving for a Person with Alzheimer's Disease: Challenges, Tips & Resources







**Alzheimer's Disease  
Resource Center**

*Keeping Help and Hope In Mind*

It takes a village to care for a person with Alzheimer's. Caregivers are the ones who provide care to individuals who need some degree of ongoing assistance with everyday tasks.

As the disease progresses, the role of a caregiver also changes. It's important for caregivers to learn and prepare for each stage.

Caregivers face many responsibilities and challenges; therefore, it's essential for caregivers to take care of their well-being and have support.



# CAREGIVING CHALLENGES



Alzheimer's can be a complicated disease to navigate. It may cause a person to exhibit unusual and unpredictable behaviors such as mood swings, physical and verbal aggression, wandering, and restlessness. These behaviors can cause challenges to the caregiver, which can lead to tension and frustration.

## COMMON CAUSES OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE


- Discomfort caused by medications or illness
- Overstimulated/loud environment
- Inability to recognize familiar faces, places, and things
- Difficulty in completing activities and tasks
- Difficulty in communicating clearly with others



## TIPS ON HOW TO RESPOND TO BEHAVIOR CHANGE

- Remain calm and be understanding
- Be patient and flexible
- Don't take behavior changes personally
- Don't argue or try to convince the person
- Remember that the behavior is the reality of the disease, and work through it





# Communication Tips for Alzheimer's Caregivers

As caregivers, we know that emotions can be compelling. People with Alzheimer's often fluctuate between various emotions, so caregivers need to find alternative ways to deal with emotions.

Redirection is the act of re-direct the attention of the person with Alzheimer's onto something else. Its purpose is to help the person with Alzheimer's feel better and eliminate negative behaviors.



## TIPS FOR REDIRECTION



1. **Maintain patience & perseverance:** This will help in your journey, do not give up.
2. **Less is more-** Reduce impulsive reactions.
3. **Love is stronger than fear-** people with Alzheimer's are more likely to listen to you when they feel loved and cared for and feel like they can trust you.
4. **Maintain a composed and pleasant tone:** People with Alzheimer's can sense your tone, meaning they can still sense your emotions.
5. **Gestures-** Body language will also speak out loud to them. Use comforting touches and postures that are warm and inviting.
6. **Lose the logic-** It is not easy for people with Alzheimer's to understand logic as they did before. It is important to empathize with them instead of blaming them.



# The Power of Music



*Caregivers find the person lost to them in the context of music*

-- Borna Bonakdarpour, MD



## What Music Can Do

- Music brings up emotions & memories
- Decreases behavioral symptoms like agitation and anxiety
- Improve communication and caregiver relationships

## Incorporating Music Activity into Daily Living

- **Play their favorite music:** Ask your loved one or other family members/friends if they know the type of music they like or if they have a favorite artist
- **Look at their response:** See what genre of music they react more to, this way you can differentiate what to play and what not to play
- **Use music to redirect:** Music can be a source of calmness for a person with Alzheimer's. It can redirect their attention when they feel frustrated or sad



# "Take care of yourself, so you have space to take care of others"

Being a caregiver can feel so rewarding, but at the same time, it can be hard on you. To give the best care, you must take care of yourself.

## What is Respite Care?

A way of taking care of yourself is by ensuring you have consistent breaks from your responsibilities. This is respite care, and there are many forms, like adult day care or short-term nursing home care.



"Research shows that even a few hours of respite a week can improve a caregiver's well-being."

## GETTING HELP FROM PEOPLE YOU KNOW

- Identify a caregiving task or time of day that you would like help with. Perhaps there's a weekly yoga session that you've been missing due to your caregiving responsibilities. **Express your needs to others.** If someone asks, "What can I do to help?" Be ready and respond with, "It would be helpful if you could stay with Dad Thursdays nights for two hours so I can go to my yoga class."
- If you are turned down, be understanding. That person may not be able to help with the task given, but they could help in the future. **Don't be afraid to ask again.**
- If you have difficulty expressing your needs in person, try sending a text or an e-mail to friends and family. Perhaps, you and immediate family members could set up a shared calendar where people can sign up when they are free to help.





# INTERESTED IN RESPITE CARE?



## ADRC'S PROGRAMS & SERVICES:

- Art Therapy
- Music Therapy
- Equine Therapy







## WEEKLY ART PROGRAM

The ADRC's Art Therapy Programs are led by professional art therapists. They introduce projects appropriate for people with Alzheimer's and other cognitive impairments, using a hands-on approach.



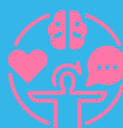
## Benefits



Stimulates and enriches those struggling with memory loss



Opens alternate pathways for expressions and recollection.



Eases behavioral symptoms like anxiety, depression and agitation



Please contact Carol Hartmann at 631-580-5100 ext. 305 for more information or to sign up.

# "Music is a language all its own."

## Music Therapy



- ADRC's interactive Music Therapy Program enables people with Alzheimer's, and their caregivers, to revel in music's restorative power.
- A professional musical therapist leads each group through a medley of familiar melodies, and participants are invited to sing, dance and play along with hand-held percussion instruments.
- It unlocks emotion, unleashes joy and enhances wellbeing. Often, an appreciation and connection to music is of great value to people with Alzheimer's, as they lose communication capacity.

Please contact Carol Hartmann at 631-580-5100 ext. 305 for more information or to sign up.







# Equine Therapy



The program is focused on people spending time “in the moment” with the horses, in a beautiful, natural setting. Participants are guided through gentle interactions, such as feeding and grooming. These activities promote connection to the accepting, friendly equine spirits. Horses are highly intuitive creatures, receptive to both verbal and non-verbal communication.

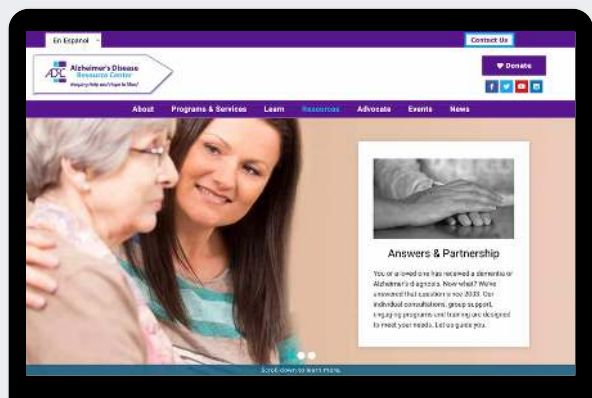


*Equine Therapy is suitable for people with early to moderate stage Alzheimer's disease, who have a reasonable degree of mobility.*



*Please contact Carol Hartmann at 631-580-5100 ext. 305 for more information or to sign up.*





For more information  
please go to: [info@ADRCinc.org](mailto:info@ADRCinc.org)

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