

alzheimer's  association®

staying strong

stress relief for the caregiver



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

“what am i going to do?”

It can feel overwhelming to take care of a loved one with dementia, but neglecting your own well-being can be harmful to both of you.

Do you let others help you?

Trying to handle everything by yourself can lead to burnout, depression and resentment.

Do you talk to others about your feelings?

You may think that no one understands. But holding in your feelings will only make you feel isolated and neglected. It's OK to open up.

Do you see your doctor?

Are you overeating? Unable to sleep? Always feeling tired? Take these signs seriously. See a doctor now before it becomes a health crisis.



Taking good care of your family also means taking care of yourself and getting some help. We can help you find relief.

staying strong

| | |
|--|----|
| 10 signs of stress checklist [©] | 4 |
| 10 ways to be a healthy caregiver [©] | 6 |
| Services you may need | 10 |

✓ 10 signs of stress checklist[©]

- ❑ 1. **Denial about the disease and its effect on the person who has been diagnosed**

I know Mamma is going to get better.

- ❑ 2. **Anger at the person with Alzheimer's, that there's no cure or that people just don't understand**

If he asks that one more time, I'll scream!

- ❑ 3. **Social withdrawal from friends and activities that used to make you feel good**

I don't feel like getting together with the neighbors anymore.

- ❑ 4. **Anxiety about the future and facing another day**

What happens when he needs more care than I can provide?

- ❑ 5. **Depression that breaks your spirit and ability to cope**

I just don't care anymore.

- ❑ **6. Exhaustion that makes it nearly impossible to complete the everyday tasks that need to get done**
I'm too tired for this.

- ❑ **7. Sleeplessness caused by a never-ending list of concerns**
What if she wanders out of the house or falls and hurts herself?

- ❑ **8. Irritability that leads to moodiness and triggers negative responses and reactions**
Leave me alone!

- ❑ **9. Lack of concentration that makes it difficult to do familiar tasks**
I was so busy, I forgot my appointment.

- ❑ **10. Health problems that begin to take their toll, both mentally and physically**
I can't remember the last time I felt good.

If you feel many of these signs, check with a doctor before the stress brings on a health crisis.

10 ways to be a healthy caregiver[©]

1. Get a diagnosis

Don't delay seeing a doctor if your loved one is showing possible signs of dementia – see our 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's[©]. Some symptoms may be treatable.

2. Know that help is out there

Your local Alzheimer's Association can put you in touch with area services to help you provide the best care.

3. Be an informed caregiver

As your loved one shows new behaviors and personality changes, we can provide ways to respond and cope.

4. Get help

Seek support from family, friends, social service agencies and your faith community. Our 24/7 Helpline and support groups provide comfort and reassurance.



Respite care services give you time to take a break. Go shopping, see a movie or enjoy an uninterrupted visit with a friend.

5. Take care of yourself

Watch your diet, exercise and get plenty of rest. Ask us about respite care services, which let you take a break.

6. Manage your level of stress

Consider how stress affects your body (stomach aches, high blood pressure) – and your emotions (overeating, irritability). Find ways to relax. Check in with your doctor.

7. Accept changes

Eventually your loved one will need more and more intensive kinds of care. Find out about the options now so you are ready for the changes as they occur.

8. Plan for the future now

See an experienced attorney to get legal and financial plans in place. Involve the person with dementia if you can.

9. Be realistic

The care you give does make a difference, but many behaviors can't be controlled. Grieve the losses. Focus on positive times as they arise and enjoy good memories.

10. Give yourself credit, not guilt

It's normal to lose patience or feel like your care may fall short sometimes. You're doing the best you can.



Find out about creative ways to respond to personality and behavior changes. Visit the Alzheimer's Association office nearest you or call 1.800.272.3900.

services you may need

Medical services

Seek a doctor experienced in dementia:

- Primary care physician
- Neurologist
- Psychiatrist

Legal services

Consult a qualified attorney, preferably one experienced in elder law, to make plans for:

- Health care and long-term care coverage
- Finances and property
- The individual who will make decisions for the person with dementia when he or she is not able

Financial services

Get professional assistance from a qualified financial adviser or an estate planning attorney about:

- Costs you may face throughout the disease
- Different ways you can cover those costs



See a qualified professional to help put legal and financial plans in place for a healthy financial future for you and your loved ones.

care services

Respite care

Respite care gives you time for rest or relief from daily concerns. It also gives the person with dementia the chance to interact with others.

Three common types are:

1. Adult day services
2. Home care
3. Residential respite

Residential care

There are two main types of residential care, based on the stage of the disease:

1. Assisted living, which combines:
 - Housing
 - Personalized supportive services
2. Skilled nursing
(mid- to high-level)
Some have specialized
dementia care

Hospice services

For those near the end of life, hospice programs combine at-home and skilled nursing service. Some offer special dementia programs.

Other support services

Consult these offices in your area to find out what services they offer:

- Faith-based organizations
- Department of Aging
- Senior centers
- Department of Health
- Hospital patient-education departments

Other potential sources for support services are:

- Private physicians
- Psychologists
- Social workers
- Counselors
- Nurses

alzheimer's association

24/7 helpline

Our highly trained staff provides reliable information and support whenever you need it at 1.800.272.3900.

information

We offer the latest on everything from diagnosis and treatment to caregiving and support groups.

- Visit your local Alzheimer's Association
- Call our 24/7 Helpline at 1.800.272.3900
- Log onto our Web site at www.alz.org
- Take part in our online message boards and chats
- Learn more about wandering and MedicAlert[®] + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return[®] at 1.888.572.8566 or www.medicalert.org/safereturn
- Contact our Green-Field Library, the nation's largest resource center devoted to Alzheimer's and dementia



It can be a relief to know how many services there are to assist you. Contact us to see what's available in your area. We can also help you overcome any barriers to using these services.

support groups

Find out about the support groups we offer for you and your loved ones. It's a safe place to talk with others who are going through the same things.



The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; to advocate for policy change; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

**For reliable information
and support, contact the
Alzheimer's Association:**

1.800.272.3900

www.alz.org

This is an official publication of the Alzheimer's Association but may be distributed by unaffiliated organizations and individuals. Such distribution does not constitute an endorsement of these parties or their activities by the Alzheimer's Association.

©2009 Alzheimer's Association. All rights reserved.