

## 7. Look for support

Find people you are comfortable with to share your feelings and emotions. It may be a member of your family, a good friend, another person with Alzheimer Disease or a support group. No matter who it is - the important thing is to share your experiences and how you are feeling. Some people also find writing their thoughts, feelings and experiences in a journal helpful.

## 8. Plan for the future

Start planning now for the future.

- If you are working, it is important to prepare for your future retirement.
- If you own a business, you will need to make plans for when you can no longer do things on your own.
- If there are decisions about your personal life that you have been putting off, make them now.
- Put your paper work in order, including legal and estate planning, if it is not already.
- Ensure that you have chosen someone to make financial and health-care decisions for you when you are unable to do so. Talk to the person about your wishes and write them down in an advance directive.

This will ensure that your requests are followed when you are unable to communicate them yourself.

## 9. Live each day

Enjoy life to the fullest. You will continue to have abilities...focus on them. Do the things you enjoy and that bring you meaning and fulfilment. Some days may be better than others, but strive to create those times each day that are satisfying and worthwhile. Maintain your physical health, exercise and eat a healthy diet.

## 10. Know the Alzheimer Society is here to help

The Society can help by:

- Giving you the information you need to learn more about the disease and coping strategies.
- Providing support whether with a telephone counsellor or a support group.
- Registering you with the Safely Home™ - Alzheimer Wandering Registry program to ensure that if you get lost, there is help at hand to get you home.
- Locating services in your community.

The Alzheimer Society is a national not-for-profit health organization dedicated to helping people affected by Alzheimer Disease. The Society has numerous resources and support programs for people with the disease and their caregivers. The Society also funds research into finding the cause and cure of the disease, and into improved methods of caregiving.

For more information, contact your local Alzheimer Society or visit our Web site at [www.alzheimer.ca](http://www.alzheimer.ca).

*Help for today. Hope for tomorrow...*

*The Alzheimer Society would like to thank both Chris and Ann for agreeing to be part of this brochure and for helping raise awareness of Alzheimer Disease. Chris was diagnosed with Alzheimer Disease in 1998.*

## Alzheimer Society

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# First Steps

## For Those Recently Diagnosed With Alzheimer Disease

Alzheimer Society

## First Steps

You have likely been worried and anxious about the changes you are seeing in yourself. Knowing you have Alzheimer Disease may be upsetting. You may be concerned about the future. However, you have already taken an important first step in caring for yourself: getting a diagnosis.

## Changes to expect

The changes you are experiencing are because of Alzheimer Disease. You may have trouble finding words, completing thoughts, following directions or remembering information. Later you may feel confused and have difficulty with familiar tasks, such as driving a car. These changes are related to the disease as it affects memory, thinking and behaviour. Other people may notice changes in your behaviour or personality. The effects of the disease will change how you live day to day.

The information in this brochure can help you cope with the changes you are experiencing and plan for future changes so you can continue living your life to its fullest every day.

### 1. Recognize that you are going through a variety of emotions

You may respond to the news of the diagnosis and the changes caused by the disease with a variety of emotions. You might feel angry, embarrassed, frustrated, afraid or sad. These emotions are very normal and may come and go. Let those close to you know how you are feeling.

It will also be helpful to be aware that members of your family may also be experiencing the same types of emotions.

Often people with Alzheimer Disease get depressed. If your feelings are overwhelming and won't go away, talk to your doctor.

### 2. Tell people

Let the people closest to you know that you are living with Alzheimer Disease. Explain what the disease is and how it is affecting you. Sharing this information will help them to know that the difficulties you are having are a result of the disease. Sharing the information will also allow you to tell them how they might be able to support you.

### 3. Learn as much as you feel you can

Find out what you can about the disease and how it will progress. Learn about tips and strategies that might help you day to day. The Alzheimer Society has many useful resources to help people with the disease, such as *Shared Experiences*, the Web site ([www.alzheimer.ca](http://www.alzheimer.ca)) and support groups.

### 4. Explore treatment options

While there is no cure for Alzheimer Disease, currently there are medications that can help some people with some of the symptoms. Read about the treatments that are available. Discuss their risks and benefits with your doctor. You may wish to participate in a research study. Your local Alzheimer Society will have information on treatment options and research studies in your area.

### 5. Recognize that you have a disease that affects your abilities

- Focus on what you can do, not what you can't.
- Find ways that might help you cope with the changes. For example, writing down important things in a memory book, labelling cupboards or marking a calendar might help with memory problems.

- Simplify your life wherever you can.
- Reduce the number of pressures you face.
- Follow a routine.

People who have the disease say you should:

- Learn to be patient.
- Try not to be hard on yourself.
- Keep in mind that you have a disease that affects your abilities.

### 6. Seek out help

There are community agencies, services and resources to help you and your family. Some offer practical services like helping with your shopping, preparing meals or providing support such as talking to a leader from your house of worship. Call your local Alzheimer Society to find out what is available in your area.

