

Alzheimer *Society*

Alzheimer's disease

# Ways to help



## **Alzheimer's disease**

**Alzheimer's disease is a progressive, degenerative disease of the brain.**

**The disease usually begins with small changes in a person's behaviour and memory. Eventually it affects all aspects of a person's life – the ability to think, understand, remember, communicate and perform simple tasks.**

## **Lending a hand**

**As more and more people are being affected by Alzheimer's disease, chances are you will know someone who is living with the disease. They may be a relative, a neighbour, a co-worker or a friend.**

**Having the disease, or caring for someone who does, can be challenging. Friends, neighbours and extended family are important sources of support for the family. Perhaps you want to help but don't know where to begin.**

## **Visiting the person with Alzheimer's disease**

### **Arrange a convenient time for your visit**

Choose a time that is best for the person. Shorten your visit if the person shows signs of fatigue.

### **Communication is the key**

Use gestures as well as words. Pace the conversation allowing time for the person to respond.

### **Introduce yourself**

If the person seems confused, identify yourself and why you are there. "It's Jane. I came to visit you today."

### **Remember and laugh together**

Recall humorous experiences you both shared. "I remember when we both..." Take pleasure in each moment.

### **Be prepared to listen**

People with Alzheimer's disease may want to share their feelings. Remain open and sympathetic.

### **Establish connection through a common interest**

Continue your favourite activity together. Listen to music. Take a walk. Concentrate on the person's talents and abilities.

### **Show that you care**

We all communicate through emotion, expression and touch. Holding a hand, or smiling when talking can convey more than words.

## Caring for the caregiver

### **Take time to listen**

If the caregiver feels overwhelmed and needs to talk with someone let them know that you are available to listen.

### **Do little things – they mean a lot**

If you're on your way out to do an errand, call and see if the caregiver needs anything.

### **Give the caregiver a break**

Offer to visit the person with Alzheimer's disease. Encourage the caregiver to use this time to enjoy a favourite hobby, run some errands or spend time alone.

### **Provide a change of scenery**

Suggest an outing to the park or a visit to your home. Whenever possible, include the person with Alzheimer's disease in the outing. Choose an activity that everyone will enjoy.

### **Keep in touch**

Maintain contact – a phone call, card, e-mail or a visit mean a great deal. Alzheimer's disease has an impact on all family members – spouses, adult children and even young children. Be attentive to their needs too.

### **Become informed**

Learn about Alzheimer's disease and how it affects the person and the family. Contact your local Alzheimer Society for more information or visit our website at [www.alzheimer.ca](http://www.alzheimer.ca).

### **Stay the course**

It is a long journey for caregivers. Any support you can provide along the way will be appreciated.

## Important things to know:

### People with Alzheimer's disease:

- Need to feel valued
- May be concerned about how the disease will affect them and their families
- Need companionship
- Strive to maintain an active and independent life
- Have the same needs as each and every one of us
- Have abilities, skills and aspirations

### Caregivers:

- Often feel alone and isolated from friends
- May need help, but are often reluctant to ask
- Are often unable to do errands or complete household tasks
- Experience stress that sometimes affects their health
- Need regular breaks from caregiving
- Need someone to listen



The Alzheimer Society is Canada's leading nationwide health charity for people living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Active in communities right across Canada, the Society:

- Offers information, support and education programs for people with dementia, their families and caregivers
- Funds research to find a cure and improve the care of people with dementia
- Promotes public education and awareness of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias to ensure people know where to turn for help
- Influences policy and decision-making to address the needs of people with dementia and their caregivers.

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

**Help for Today. *Hope for Tomorrow...***<sup>®</sup>

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**Alzheimer** *Society*

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