

# Your Family's Journey and Alzheimer's

When a loved one is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, family members are an important source of support and help. However, everyone processes a diagnosis differently. We have a wide range of resources to help families better understand the disease and how to work together. This helps every one become a source of emotional support, share responsibilities and even come together in activities the family enjoys.

## You Can Take Action

**Family members may have a wide range of reactions to the effects of Alzheimer's. These tips can help everybody in the family deal with the effects of a loved one's Alzheimer's:<sup>1,2,3</sup>**

**Keep lines of communication open and clear.**

Managing care and building emotional support starts with good communication. When a loved one is diagnosed with Alzheimer's, let other family members know early. This way, they will have a better understanding of what is going on and may be able to help with care. Throughout your loved one's journey, continue to speak openly about your feelings and listen to what others are going through. It's good for everyone.

**Nurture emotional support.** Your family members may likely experience many different feelings, from grief, sadness and anger to guilt. All of you may need time to process and accept the diagnosis and the ongoing changes associated with Alzheimer's. Forming a support network for each other makes it easier to deal with these feelings. This may include your family members, but can also include friends, Alzheimer's support groups, or other trusted people in your life.

**Share care responsibilities.** By dividing caregiving activities and responsibilities among your family, you can reduce everyone's stress and make sure that your loved one is receiving the best care possible. Make a list of roles and responsibilities—both right now and for the future—and have relatives take on the ones that they feel they can do best. When everyone does their part, it will create tighter bonds and a sense of teamwork.

**Pay special attention to the needs of younger family members.**

Children and young adults can sometimes feel left out of the conversation. Like other family members, they experience many different emotions, but they don't always know how to talk about these feelings. Let children know they can always ask questions, express their feelings, and turn to relatives for support. Most of all, make sure they understand they can still spend meaningful quality time with their loved one with Alzheimer's.

**Understand that relationships may change.** Over time, the symptoms of Alzheimer's will change a person's relationships with spouses, children, grandchildren, siblings, and other family members. By planning ahead and accepting these changes, it makes it easier for the family to deal with the disease's symptoms and continue to enjoy time with their loved one.

**Don't hesitate to use outside resources.** Caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's often causes conflict in families. If this happens, it's okay. Ask for help. Counseling or mediation can help you solve problems, find common ground and minimize stress. You might also consider a professional geriatric care manager, who can provide experienced advice about your loved one's long-term care.

1. <https://www.brightfocus.org/alzheimers/family-and-relationships>
2. [https://alzheimer.ca/en/help-support/i-have-friend-or-family-member-who-lives-dementia/understanding-how-your-relationship#impact\\_on\\_family\\_and\\_friends](https://alzheimer.ca/en/help-support/i-have-friend-or-family-member-who-lives-dementia/understanding-how-your-relationship#impact_on_family_and_friends)
3. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/caregivers/in-depth/alzheimers/art-20047365>