

Dementia/Alzheimer's Disease



People who develop Dementia/Alzheimer's will experience the disease in different ways. This includes the rate at which the disease progresses and the type and severity of the symptoms. These differences depend on many factors including age, personality, physical health, family history and cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Three stages are used to categorize Alzheimer's disease: Mild, Moderate, and Severe. Some of the signs and symptoms may overlap from one stage to the next.

Mild Alzheimer's

- ◆ Not remembering recent events.
- ◆ Asking the same questions repeatedly.
- ◆ Having problems with abstract thought.
- ◆ Misplacing items, such as putting their wallet in the refrigerator.
- ◆ Becoming lost while driving on familiar streets.
- ◆ Denial is common.
- ◆ Depression is common and should be treated as soon as possible.
- ◆ Driving becomes riskier with reflexes slowing and judgment impaired. Family should consider curtailing or eliminating their driving.

Moderate Alzheimer's

- ◆ Sleeping for excessively long periods of time (10 - 12 hours), or sleeping only 2 - 4 hours.
- ◆ Difficulty with tasks that require skilled movement such as, tying shoe laces and using utensils.
- ◆ Losing the ability to read and write.
- ◆ Exhibits extreme behaviors, such as aggressiveness, withdrawal and outbursts of anger.
- ◆ Having delusions and hallucinations.
- ◆ May be incontinent.
- ◆ Unable to recall relevant aspects of their current lives, e.g. address, telephone number, names of loved ones, day of the week.
- ◆ Will require assistance with daily living skills - dressing etc.

Severe Alzheimer's

- ◆ Can no longer think or reason.
- ◆ Essential tasks of living - bathing, dressing, eating, and going to the bathroom, requires a caregiver's full assistance.
- ◆ Motor activities have deteriorated - can no longer walk, set up or communicate.
- ◆ Incontinence due to lack of bladder and bowel control.
- ◆ Bedridden
- ◆ Very vulnerable to pneumonia.
- ◆ Death occurs, on average, about 6 to 8 years following recognition of the symptoms of dementia according to Mayo Clinic.

Caregiving Tips



Create a calm, safe environment that may be better suited for the person's abilities:

- ◆ Eliminate clutter, noise, glare, and excessive background noise.
- ◆ Develop soothing rituals with regular daily routines, comforting objects, gentle music and reassuring touch.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for exercising and satisfying activities geared to the person's abilities.
- ◆ Monitor personal comfort: ensure a comfortable temperature and check regularly for pain, hunger, thirst, constipation, full bladder, fatigue, infection and skin irritation.
- ◆ Be sensitive to frustration about expressing wants and needs, validate their feelings.
- ◆ Rather than argue or disagree, redirect the person's attention.
- ◆ Simplify tasks and routines.
- ◆ Avoid open-ended questions: ask yes or no questions instead.
- ◆ Allow enough rest between stimulating events, such as visits from friends or neighbors.
- ◆ Use labels to cue or remind the person.
- ◆ Equip doors and gates with safety locks.
- ◆ Remove guns.

Just Some Thoughts for the Brain



Healthy Eating: The Alzheimer's Association warns against a diet of foods high in cholesterol and saturated fat. They suggest:

- ◆ Omega 3 (salmon, tuna, sardines)
- ◆ Whole grains (oatmeal)
- ◆ Whole grain bread
- ◆ Brown rice
- ◆ Nuts & seeds (almonds & flaxseed)
- ◆ Dark green leafy vegetables
- ◆ Blueberries
- ◆ Olive oil
- ◆ Daily small square of dark chocolate
- ◆ Green tea
- ◆ Avocados

(Always check with your doctor when making any dietary changes).

Enrichment activities will vary based on the stage of the disease. Keeping the brain active may help build up a reserve of brain cells and connectors.

- ◆ Pet therapy
- ◆ Puzzles
- ◆ Listening to music
- ◆ Color pictures
- ◆ Light gardening
- ◆ Fold laundry
- ◆ Sing old songs
- ◆ Play computer brain games: www.smartbrain-games.com

Services and Programs to Help You



You Don't have to do this Alone

- ◆ Day Care Programs provide quality care & structured activities while offering respite
 - Starpath - 600 Grand River Ave, Port Huron, www.thecouncilonaging.org (810) 984-8970
 - VNA - Specialized Adult Day Program 1430 Military St. Suite A, Port Huron (810) 984-4131 www.vnabwh.com
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Services and Programs to Help You

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The following agencies can help you with the resources listed below:

- ◆ St. Clair County Community Mental Health - (810) 987-6911
- ◆ Council on Aging Inc. serving St. Clair County - (810) 984-5061
- ◆ United Way of St. Clair County - (810) 985-7161
- ◆ Area Agency on Aging 1-B - (800) 852-7795

Skilled Home Care - A covered benefit by Medicare and most private insurance. Services may include, nursing, physical, occupational and speech therapy, social work and a home health aid. (please look in the yellow pages or on-line for a listing of providers)

Private Duty - This is not covered by insurance but may be a benefit of a long term care policy. Services include personal care, meal prep, homemaking and assistance with other activities of daily living.

Respite Care - Is a temporary relief for those caring for family members.

Assisted Living - Housing in which housekeeping, meals, medical care and other assistance is available to the residents. Go to www.assistedlivingdirectory.com.

Adult Foster Care - A residential setting that provides 24 hour protection, personal care, and supervision of the elderly. Please check on-line for a listing at: <http://michigan.gov/dhs>, click on the tab: on-line services, click on: Adult Foster Care and Homes for Aged Facilities

Long Term Care - It is recommended when a person is in need of total care with all daily living activities.

- ◆ Barss Residential Care: (800) 646-4618
- ◆ Marwood Nursing and Rehab: (810) 982-9500
- ◆ Medilodge of Port Huron: (810) 385-7447
- ◆ Medilodge of St. Clair: (810) 329-4736
- ◆ Medilodge of Yale: (810) 387-3226
- ◆ Regency-On-The-Lake: (810) 385-7260
- ◆ Sanctuary at Mercy Village: (810) 989-7440

Hospice Care - Please refer to the Yellow Pages or on-line for a listing of providers.

Website and Resources



Alzheimer's Association Harry L. Nelson Help Line
(800) 272-3900

Here is a list of internet sites for more information:

- ◆ www.alz.org (Alzheimer's Association)
- ◆ www.alz.org/gmc/ (Greater Michigan Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association)
- ◆ www.alzheimers.gov (US Government Site)
- ◆ www.alzheimersreadingroom.com (chat room to exchange questions)
- ◆ www.nia.nih.gov (National Institute on Aging - National Institutes of Health)
- ◆ www.mayoclinic.org - Patient Care/Health Info - click on Diseases and conditions, Click "A" then scroll down to Alzheimer's

Any of the St. Clair County Library sites can assist in finding pertinent websites.

Books that may help:

- ◆ *36 - Hour Day* - by Nancy L Mace. MA and Peter V. Rabins, M.D., M.P.H
- ◆ *Mayo Clinic - Guide to Alzheimer's Disease*
- ◆ *A Caregiver's Guide and Sourcebook* - by Howard Guetzner
- ◆ *Learning to Speak Alzheimer's* - by Joanne Koenig Coste
- ◆ *Alzheimer's Early Stages: First Steps for Family, Friends and Caregivers* - by Daniel Kuhn, David A. Bennett
- ◆ *Alzheimer's from the inside out* - by Richard Taylor, PHD
- ◆ *Measure of the Heart* - by Mary Ellen Geist
- ◆ *Still Alice* - by Lisa Genova
- ◆ *Coach Broyles' Playbook for Alzheimer's Caregivers: A Practical Tips Guide* - Amazon.com

Publication forms can be ordered from the Alzheimer's Association, most national book companies, and Port Huron Hospital Lang Health Library.

**This pamphlet was made available for you by the:
Alzheimer's / Dementia Resource
Committee of St. Clair County**

St. Clair County Resources for: Dementia and Alzheimer Disease



There is Help - You are Not Alone



Dementia is a symptom of a brain disorder, while Alzheimer's is one of the diseases. It affects the ability to remember things and think clearly. Finding out that a loved one has Dementia or Alzheimer's Disease can be stressful, frightening and overwhelming.

As you begin to take stock of the situation, here are some tips that may help:

- ◆ Write your questions down as you think of them and ask the doctor any questions you have.
- ◆ Ask if a Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) has been performed.
- ◆ Contact organizations such as the Alzheimer's Association (1-800-272-3900) for more information.
- ◆ Find a support group where you can share your feelings and concerns. Here is a list of resources:
 - Port Huron Hospital (810) 989-3121
 - St. Joseph Mercy Hospital (810) 987-1035
 - Sanctuary at Mercy (810) 989-7440
- ◆ Study your day to see if you can develop a routine that makes things go more smoothly.
- ◆ Try to be flexible.
- ◆ Consider using adult day care or respite services to ease the day to day demands of care giving.
- ◆ Begin to plan for the future. This may include getting financial and legal documents in order, and investigating long term care options. Also what services are covered by health insurance, Medicare and long term care policies if you have one.
- ◆ *Make sure you take care of yourself as the caregiver!*