

Dealing With Alzheimer's Disease

(NAPSA)—Americans are now living longer than ever before. That's good news, but there can be a down side.

Since advanced age is a primary risk factor for Alzheimer's disease (AD), the possibility of millions developing it can be a daunting prospect for families and for society.

Right now there are about 4.5 million Americans with the disease. By 2050, as many as 16 million could be affected. One in ten Americans 65 and older and almost half of those over 85 are at risk. For every person with Alzheimer's, it's estimated there are one to four caregivers.

AD is a gradual, degenerative brain disease affecting a person's personality, ability to manage daily activities and capacity to remember, think, use language appropriately and learn new things. If you suspect that you or a loved one may have AD, the first step is to seek medical attention to find the cause. Sometimes another condition which is treatable may be causing the symptoms, or if it is AD there are new medications that may be able to delay the progression of symptoms if begun early in the course of the disease.

Caring for someone with AD is a long, ever-changing journey. It's helpful to start planning as early as possible in the illness and to seek help when you need it. When a loved one has Alzheimer's disease, there are ways to make life easier and to help



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both you and your loved one cope with the condition.

- Focus on the positive. Let small successes bring satisfaction.
- Continue to communicate with your family member and always treat him or her as an adult.
- Be patient with yourself as well as your family member.
- Don't be afraid to experiment and try new ways to best meet his or her needs.
- Be prepared to anticipate hazards and adjust the environment. Potential dangers can include smoking, cooking, power equipment, steps, scatter rugs, swimming pools, household cleaners, medications and razor blades.
- Use night lights, install grab bars in the bathroom and lower the hot water temperature to prevent burns.

- Try to establish a structured, daily routine including pleasurable activities such as listening to music and household tasks your loved one can perform.

- Consider speaking with an elder-law attorney early in the illness. Your family member may want you or someone else to make financial and health-care decisions.

- Focus on feelings, not facts and be aware of nonverbal communication.

- As a caregiver, you also need to remember to take care of yourself. Eat properly. Get adequate rest and exercise. When you can, schedule recreation and relaxation away from the situation.

- Consider joining a caregiver support group. It can provide both emotional support and practical assistance.

- Become an educated caregiver—gradually. Too much information at one time can seem overwhelming. One good source is a free booklet from the MetLife Mature Market Institute called "Alzheimer's Disease—Caregiving Challenges." It's part of the Since You Care series of guides created in cooperation with the National Alliance for Caregiving. It includes advice, resources, checklists and encouragement. You can get a copy by calling 1-203-221-6580, e-mailing maturemarketinstitute@metlife.com, visiting www.maturemarketinstitute.com or writing to MetLife Mature Market Institute, 57 Greens Farms Road, Westport, CT 06880.