

10 Steps to Take Following an Alzheimer's Diagnosis

Alzheimer's is a brain disease that causes a slow decline in memory, thinking and reasoning skills. If you notice any of the [10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's](#) in yourself, a family member or a friend, it's important not to ignore them. Schedule an appointment to speak with a doctor. Though the experience can be daunting, early detection can help you make informed decisions about the future and focus on living in a way that's meaningful to you. Following are steps you can take following an Alzheimer's diagnosis to move forward and live your best life.

1. Get educated
 - It's normal to be hesitant or resistant to learning how the disease will progress and affect your life. However, learning about your Alzheimer's diagnosis is the first step in empowering yourself to make important decisions about how you want to live your life and how you will plan for a future. Learn at your own pace and remember that you are not alone. There are people who understand what you are going through, and help is available.
2. Take time to process
 - There's no "right" way to respond to an Alzheimer's diagnosis. Some people experience depression and may want to withdraw. Others are comforted by knowing what's wrong and feeling empowered to prioritize what's most important in life. There's also no limit on the length of time someone is "allowed" to grieve. Take time to fully process the diagnosis.
3. Explore medications
 - Currently, there is no cure for Alzheimer's, nor are there any treatments to prevent, reverse or slow the progression of the disease. However, there are medications that may help lessen the symptoms of Alzheimer's, such as memory loss and confusion, for a limited time. An early Alzheimer's diagnosis provides you with a better chance of benefiting from treatment.
4. Communicate your wishes
 - Do you know who you would want to make decisions for you in the event you're no longer able to? An early Alzheimer's diagnosis means you can put your long-term care wishes in writing. Being open with your family and support network about what you want during each stage of the disease can give you peace of mind, reduce the burden on family members and prevent disagreements.

5. Plan your financial future

- An Alzheimer's diagnosis can throw a wrench into your best-laid plans. Don't put off talking about finances and future care. Take time to make sure your will and estate plans are up-to-date and factor the disease into your financial plans. Putting financial and legal plans in place now allows you to be as involved in these decisions as you'd like to be.

6. Enroll in a clinical trial

- Without clinical trials, there can be no better treatments, no prevention and no cure for Alzheimer's disease. By enrolling in a clinical trial, you can help accelerate progress and provide researchers with valuable insights. Participating in a clinical trial also gives you access to medical care at leading healthcare facilities, often free of cost.

7. Stay connected

- Not all family and friends live near one another, which can complicate the logistics of long-term care. Following a diagnosis, people living with Alzheimer's are at their most vulnerable, and it's important for them to find better ways to stay connected and make the most of the time left. Be sure to keep in touch and make plans for regular communication.

8. Find a community

- An Alzheimer's diagnosis opens up a community of people who understand what you and your family and friends are going through. Sharing your personal journey with the disease and listening to others' can be both therapeutic and insightful. You may learn you're not alone in the challenges you experience, and you can find new ways to cope and improve quality of life.

9. Join the cause

- Joining the Alzheimer's cause can give a sense of renewed purpose, whether it's through advocating for policy changes, fundraising for research, raising disease awareness, combatting stigma or volunteering. Taking action empowers you to bring us closer to a world without Alzheimer's.

10. Live your best life

- Having Alzheimer's may help you decide how you want to spend your time, in the way that you're able. Everyone is different. Some people may want and need to continue working during the early stage of the disease, while others decide to retire immediately. Some plan big vacations, while others long to spend more time at home. Focus on the aspects of your life that give you the most joy and aim to spend your time in the way that's most meaningful to you.