

alzheimer's  association®

staying strong

Stress relief for a caregiver



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer®

“what am i going to do?”

It can feel overwhelming to take care of a person with dementia, but neglecting your own well-being can be harmful to both of you.

Do you let others help you?

Trying to handle everything by yourself can lead to burnout, depression and resentment.

Do you talk to others about your feelings?

You may think that no one understands. But holding in your feelings will only make you feel isolated and neglected. It's OK to open up.

Do you see your doctor?

Are you overeating? Unable to sleep? Always feeling tired? Not keeping up with routine health care appointments? Take these signs seriously. See a doctor now before you experience a health crisis.



Taking good care of your family also means taking care of yourself and getting some help. The following information can help you find relief.

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1. 10 signs of stress checklist[®]

- ❑ **1 Denial** about the disease and its effect on the person who has been diagnosed.
I know Mamma is going to get better.

- ❑ **2 Anger** at the person with Alzheimer's, that there's no cure or that people just don't understand.
If he asks that one more time, I'll scream!

- ❑ **3 Social withdrawal** from friends and activities that used to make you feel good.
I don't feel like getting together with the neighbors anymore.

- ❑ **4 Anxiety** about the future and facing another day.
What happens when he needs more care than I can provide?

- ❑ **5 Depression** that breaks your spirit and ability to cope.
I just don't care anymore.

- ❑ **6 Exhaustion** that makes it nearly impossible to complete the everyday tasks that need to get done.
I'm too tired for this.

- ❑ **7 Sleeplessness** caused by a never-ending list of concerns.
What if she wanders out of the house or falls and hurts herself?

- ❑ **8 Irritability** that leads to moodiness and triggers negative responses and reactions.
Leave me alone!

- ❑ **9 Lack of concentration** that makes it difficult to do familiar tasks.
I was so busy, I forgot my appointment.

- ❑ **10 Health problems** that begin to take their toll, both mentally and physically.
I can't remember the last time I felt good.

If you are experiencing any of these signs, talk with a doctor before the stress brings on a health crisis.



2. 10 ways to be a healthy caregiver[®]

1 Get a diagnosis.

Don't delay seeing a doctor if your friend or family member is showing possible signs of dementia — see our **10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's** ([alz.org/10signs](https://www.alz.org/10signs)). Some symptoms may be treatable.

2 Know that help is out there.

The Alzheimer's Association can put you in touch with local services to help you provide the best care.

3 Be an informed caregiver.

As the person with dementia shows new behaviors and personality changes, we can provide ways to respond and cope.

4 Get help.

Seek support from family, friends, social service agencies and your faith community. Our 24/7 Helpline ([800.272.3900](tel:8002723900)) and support groups, both online ([alzconnected.org](https://www.alzconnected.org)) and in-person, provide comfort and reassurance.

5 Take care of yourself.

Watch your diet, exercise and get plenty of rest. Ask us about respite care services, which let you take a break.

6 Manage your level of stress.

Consider how stress affects your body (stomachaches, high blood pressure) and your emotions (overeating, irritability). Find ways to relax. Check in with your doctor.

7 Accept changes.

Eventually the person with dementia will need more and more intensive kinds of care. Find out about the options now so you are ready for the changes as they occur.

8 Plan for the future now.

See an experienced attorney to get legal and financial plans in place. Involve the person with dementia if you can.

9 Be realistic.

The care you give does make a difference, but many behaviors can't be controlled. Grieve the losses. Focus on positive times as they arise and enjoy good memories.

10 Give yourself credit, not guilt.

It's normal to lose patience or feel like your care may fall short sometimes. You're doing the best you can, and the person with dementia feels that you care.

3. services you may need

Medical services

Seek a doctor experienced in dementia:

- Primary care physician
- Geriatrician
- Neurologist
- Psychiatrist

Legal services

Consult a qualified attorney, preferably one experienced in elder law, to make plans for:

- Health care and long-term care coverage
- Finances and property
- The individual who will make decisions for the person with dementia when he or she is not able

Financial services

Get professional assistance from a qualified financial adviser or estate planning attorney about:

- Costs you may face throughout the disease
- Resources to help cover those costs

See a qualified professional to help put legal and financial plans in place for a healthy financial future for you and the person with dementia.

Care Services

Respite care

Respite care gives you time for rest or relief from daily concerns. It also gives the person with dementia the chance to interact with others.

Three common types are:

- 1 Adult day services
- 2 Home care
- 3 Residential respite

Residential care

There are two main types of residential care, based on the stage of the disease:

- 1 Assisted living, which combines housing and personalized supportive services
- 2 Skilled nursing (mid- to high-level), some have specialized dementia care

Hospice services

For those near the end of life, hospice programs combine at-home and skilled nursing services to provide comfort care. Some offer special dementia programs.

Respite care services give you time to take a break. Go shopping, see a movie or enjoy an uninterrupted visit with a friend.



Other support services

Consult these offices in your area to find out what services they offer:

- Faith-based organizations
- Area agencies on aging
- State units on aging
- Senior centers
- Department of Health
- Hospital patient-education departments

Other potential sources for support services are:

- Private physicians
- Psychologists
- Social workers
- Geriatric care managers
- Counselors
- Nurses

Information

We offer the latest on everything from diagnosis and treatment to caregiving and support groups.

- Visit your local Alzheimer's Association office.
- Call our **24/7 Helpline** at **800.272.3900** to get reliable information and support from our highly trained staff.
- Visit our website at **alz.org** for information and resources.
- Connect with other caregivers online through AlzConnected (**alzconnected.org**) a social networking community powered by the Alzheimer's Association.
- Visit our Safety Center at **alz.org/safety** for information, tips and resources to assist you with safety inside and outside the home, wandering and getting lost, and driving and dementia.
- Search our Green-Field Library, the nation's largest resource center devoted to Alzheimer's and dementia, at **alz.org/library**.

Support Groups

Find out about the support groups the Alzheimer's Association offers you and your family members. The groups provide a safe place to talk with others who are going through the same things. Search for groups near you at **alz.org** or visit **alzconnected.org** to connect with other caregivers online.

It can be a relief to know how many services there are to assist you. Contact us at **800.272.3900** to see what's available in your area. We can also help you overcome any barriers to using these services.

alzheimer's association®

The Alzheimer's Association is the world's leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's®.

For information and support,
contact the Alzheimer's Association:

800.272.3900
alz.org

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