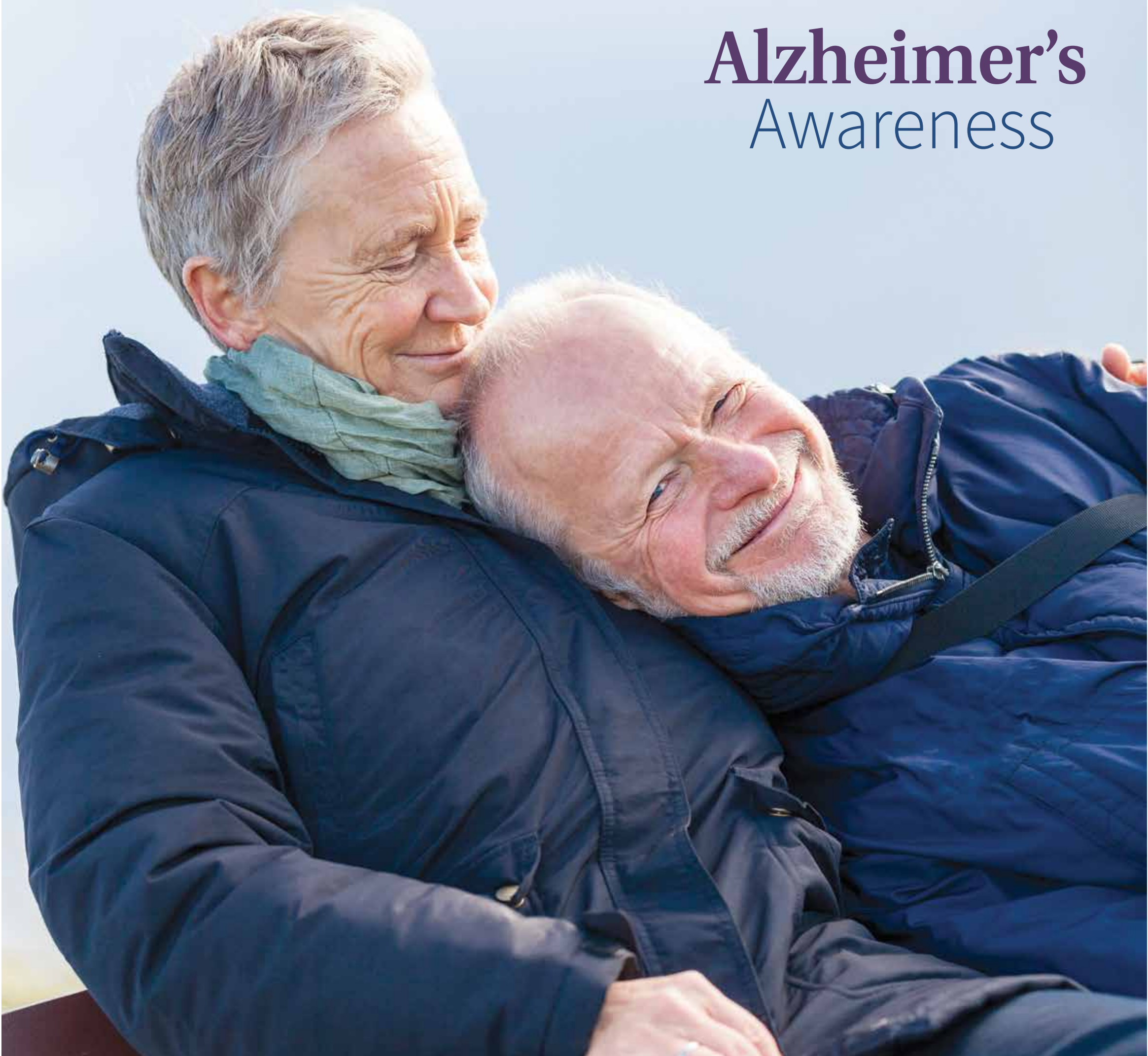


Alzheimer's Awareness



What Is Alzheimer's Disease?

Alzheimer's disease is a type of dementia that affects memory, thinking and behavior. Symptoms eventually grow severe enough to interfere with daily tasks.

Alzheimer's is not the same as dementia, but Alzheimer's is one of the leading causes of dementia, a general term for memory loss and other cognitive abilities serious enough to interfere with daily life.

WHO CAN GET IT?

Alzheimer's mostly affects people that are 60 years or older. The greatest known risk factor is aging. Alzheimer's can also affect younger people. The Alzheimer's Association says that 200,000 Americans under the age of 65 have younger-onset Alzheimer's disease.

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Scientists do not fully understand what causes Alzheimer's. Age is the best known risk factor; it's a progressive disease, meaning it worsens with age. Many researchers believe genetics may play a big role in developing Alzheimer's disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says researchers are studying whether education, diet and environment play a role in



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developing Alzheimer's disease. There is evidence showing that physical, mental and social activities may reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

HOW IS ALZHEIMER'S TREATED?

There is no cure for Alzheimer's disease. Medical experts work to improve the quality of life for people with

Alzheimer's by helping maintain mental functions, manage behavioral symptoms, and attempting to slow or delay the symptoms. The National Institute of Aging says researchers hope to develop therapies targeting specific genetic, molecular and cellular mechanisms so the actual underlying cause of the disease can be stopped or prevented.

HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

According to the NIA, doctors use several methods to determine whether a person experiencing memory loss has Alzheimer's.

Doctors ask the person and a family member or friend questions about overall health, prescription use, over-the-counter medicines, diet, past medical problems, ability to carry out daily activities

and changes in behavior or personality. They may conduct a memory test, assess problem-solving skills, attention, counting and language. There may also be standard medical tests to identify other possible causes for the symptoms. Finally, the doctor may order brain scans.

If you or a loved one is experiencing memory loss, seek professional help.

Stages of Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease can begin affecting the brain up to 10 years before any signs or symptoms show in a person.

The Alzheimer's Association and National Institute of Aging say there are three stages of Alzheimer's disease. The first is mild or early stage Alzheimer's.

EARLY STAGE ALZHEIMER'S

Most people in the early or mild stage of Alzheimer's disease are still able to function by themselves. In this stage, people experience greater memory loss and other cognitive difficulties. People may feel as if they are experiencing memory lapses.

Problems include wandering, getting lost, trouble handling money, repeating questions and taking longer to do normal daily tasks. Most family members or close friends may notice the cognitive changes.

Doctors recommend that caregivers and the person with Alzheimer's start any legal, financial or end-of-life plans as the disease will progress.

MIDDLE STAGE ALZHEIMER'S

The middle stage of Alzheimer's disease is where damage occurs in areas of the brain that control language, reasoning, sensory process-



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ing and conscious thought. This stage typically can last the longest and for many years. Memory loss and confusion grow worse, and people begin to have problems recognizing family and friends in this stage.

As the disease progresses,

the person with Alzheimer's will continually need more assistance from family or close friends. Most medical experts recommend caregivers consider respite or an adult day care to help with the increasing care time and work.

LATE STAGE ALZHEIMER'S

The last stage of Alzheimer's is severe or late stage Alzheimer's disease. Ultimately, brain tissue shrinks significantly. Those with severe Alzheimer's cannot communicate and are completely dependent on others for their

care. Near the end, they may be in bed most or all the time as the body slowly shuts down. At this stage, caregivers are recommended to use support services such as hospice. The best care you can give someone at this point is to make sure they are comfortable.

10 Early Signs of Alzheimer's

As scientists continue to investigate the brain as Alzheimer's progresses, there are signs that show the brain damage begins years before memory or other cognitive problems begin.

Here are the 10 early signs and symptoms to watch out for according to the Alzheimer's Association.

MEMORY LOSS

One of the most common signs of Alzheimer's disease, especially in the early stage, is memory loss. Usually, those in the early stage of Alzheimer's experience forgetting recently learned information or important dates and events, asking the same questions over and over and increasingly need to rely on memory aids or family members to handle things they used to do on their own.

CHALLENGES IN PLANNING OR PROBLEM-SOLVING

Some people experiencing Alzheimer's or a form of dementia show changes in their ability to develop or follow a plan.

Other difficulties they may experience include keeping track of bills and money, concentrating and learning new things.



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DIFFICULTY COMPLETING A FAMILIAR TASK

People with Alzheimer's find it difficult to perform familiar tasks they once had no problem with. These kinds of tasks include driving to a familiar location, needing help using a microwave or using a remote control.

CONFUSION WITH TIME OR PLACE

People with progressing Alzheimer's may experience losing track of dates, time of year and time. They may also forget where they are or how they got to a location.

TROUBLE UNDERSTANDING VISUAL IMAGES

Some people affected with Alzheimer's disease experience vision problems such as having difficulty with balance or trouble reading. This may also cause problems such as determining distance and color or contrast, causing issues with driving for some.

TROUBLE SPEAKING OR WRITING

People with Alzheimer's may find it difficult following or joining in conversations. They may stop in the middle of a conversation and forget what

they are saying repeatedly. They may have trouble pronouncing words, with vocabulary or have trouble naming a familiar object or person.

MISPLACING ITEMS

A person with Alzheimer's disease may place things in unusual places. They may be unable to retrace their steps to find where they left the item. People living with Alzheimer's may tend to accuse others of stealing as the disease progresses.

POOR JUDGMENT

People may experience changes in judgment or decision-making, especially regard-

ing money or paying less attention to grooming or keeping themselves clean.

WITHDRAWAL FROM WORK OR SOCIALIZING

A person with Alzheimer's may find it difficult to hold or follow conversations. As a result, they tend to withdraw themselves from conversations, hobbies or activities.

MOOD CHANGES

As the disease progresses, people may experience changes in mood and personality. They can be more confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful or anxious, or easily upset.

Why Get Checked?

It's important to see a doctor if you or your family notice any of the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease.

Catching it early can provide benefits for those who are diagnosed. Alzheimer's Association has a list of the many benefits that come with being checked for Alzheimer's disease.

MEDICAL BENEFITS

Getting checked by your doctor can help you know if you really are experiencing Alzheimer's disease or not. Some symptoms you may be feeling could just be the result of aging. Seeing your doctor can provide you with the relief of knowing for sure what is occurring in you.

ACCESS TO TREATMENT

If Alzheimer's is the cause of symptoms, an early diagnosis can help give you access to treatment options. There are no medications to cure Alzheimer's, but there are some medications that can help lessen symptoms. Catching Alzheimer's early can provide you with a variety of treatment options and gives you a better chance of benefiting from your treatment.

BE A PART OF THE EFFORT

Seeing a doctor can also help you contribute to the effort in finding a cure by par-



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ticipating in clinical trials. This research may provide medical benefits.

PRIORITIZE YOUR HEALTH

Prioritize your health by seeing your doctor. Whether you are diagnosed with Alzheimer's or not, see your doctor and focus on making life changes. Quit smoking,

control your blood pressure, exercise and take care of your social and mental health. All these things can help preserve your cognitive functions if you are diagnosed.

EMOTIONAL BENEFITS

Being diagnosed early may help relieve any anxieties you or your family are experiencing. You and your family can

also have the chance to prioritize more time together.

PLAN THE FUTURE

Although this may be one of the hardest parts of being diagnosed early, plan your family's future. Be open with your family about what you want throughout each stage of your disease. This can help give your family some peace of

mind knowing that you are happy at each stage of your diagnosis.

Early diagnosis can also help you plan your legal, financial and end-of-life decisions. Take the time to review all legal documents and all finances. This will help allow you to relieve your family of any stress and allow you to focus on spending quality time with them.

Approaching Memory Loss

If you or a family member ever have the sense that you may be forgetting things more often or see changes in behavior, it's natural to worry.

It's important that you or your family member are vocal about issues you may seem to be having. Diagnosing a problem as soon as changes are seen can mean the difference in care plans.

Here is a guide provided by the Alzheimer's Association about how to approach memory loss concerns.

DO YOU NOTICE CHANGES?

If you or a person are thinking you may be experiencing changes mentally and behaviorally, it's important that the first thing you do is assess what is going on. What have noticed recently that may be different? Are you forgetting places you've gone to for years, people's names or find it difficult to keep a conversation?

WHAT ELSE MAY BE AFFECTING YOU?

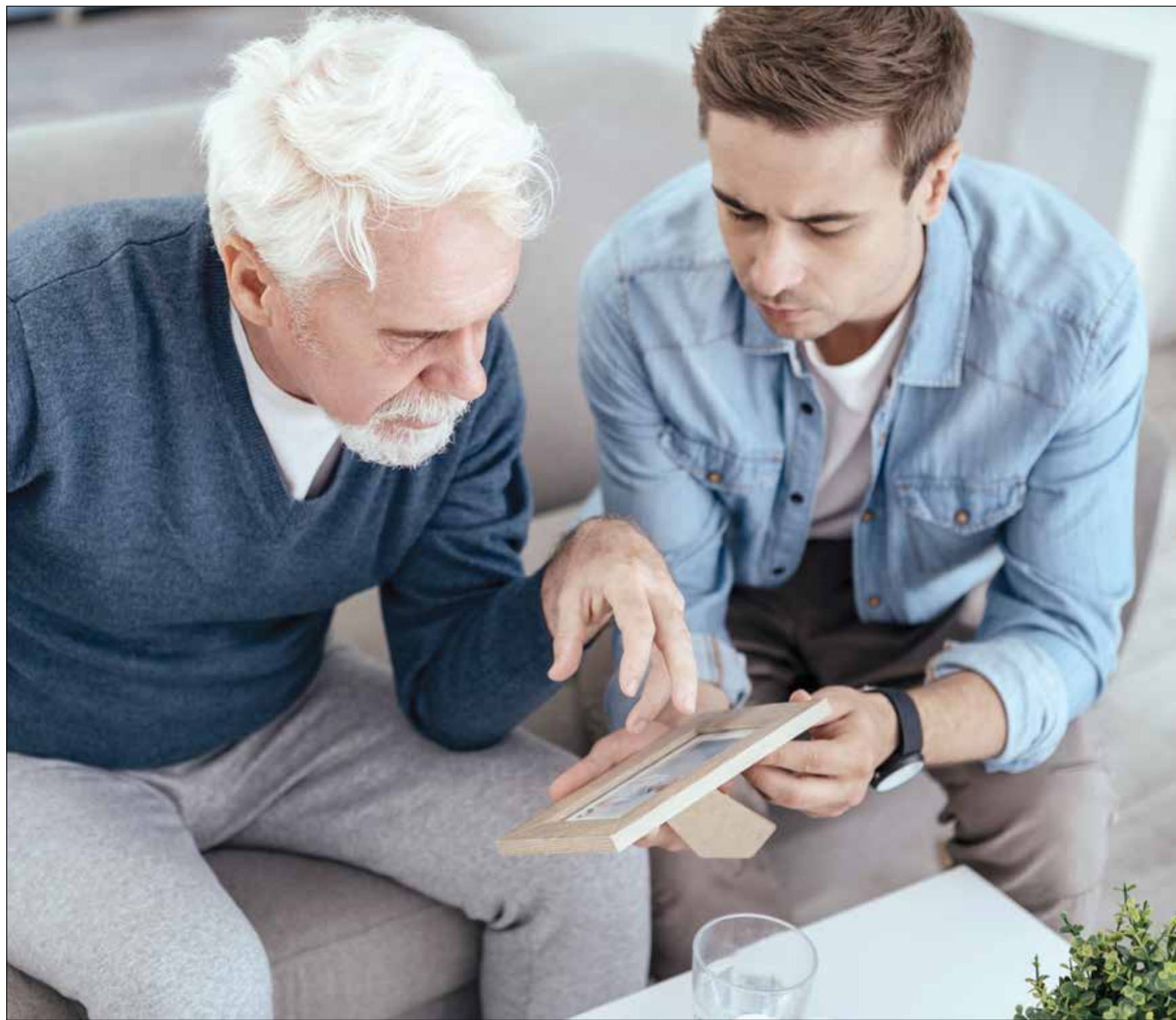
There are various conditions in life that can affect short-term and long-term memory. Are there any lifestyle choices, drugs or health issues you think may be the cause for these changes?

DOES SOMEONE ELSE NOTICE?

Have any friends or family noticed or pointed out any odd or different behaviors to you? Have they expressed concerns for your overall health? What are some of the things they noticed were different?

KNOW THE SYMPTOMS

Take time to see look over the symp-



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toms with family and see if any of the behavioral and mental changes you may be experiencing are linked to the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease.

START A CONVERSATION

The Alzheimer's Association says if you noticed changes in yourself, con-

fide in someone that you trust. If you've noticed changes in a family member, they may choose to confide in you. The best time to talk is as soon as the changes occur. It's important that everything is done as early as possible.

Bringing up a conversation about

health concerns is never easy, especially, if it involves loved ones that are close to you.

Bringing up concerns may make things seem more real for you and family members. If you need help, call the Alzheimer's Association at 800-272-3900.

Living With Alzheimer's

If you or a loved one find it difficult to complete daily tasks and are struggling to live with Alzheimer's disease, then read these tips on daily life from the Alzheimer's Association.

ACCEPT THE CHANGES

One of the hardest things for people with Alzheimer's is to accept the reality of having the disease. For some, even coming to terms of accepting the symptoms will make it more real and painful for them. The Alzheimer's Association says accepting your changes in abilities and adapting with new coping skills can help restore balance to your life and give you a sense of accomplishment as you continue to live with the disease. Developing coping strategies can help you remain engaged and active, respond to challenges that will help you maximize your independence, and maintain a sense of control over your life.

CREATE A COPING STRATEGY

You and your family may have already noticed changes in your ability to complete daily task. You don't have to develop a complicated coping strategy to cope with



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Alzheimer's. The Alzheimer's Association says you can simplify the process by focusing on these three steps.

1. Identify. Make a list of tasks that have become more challenging: Focus on developing coping strategies for your more challenging tasks. If you are forgetting to do

tasks such as taking medications, laundry or brushing your teeth in the morning, focus on setting a reminder for the medication.

2. Prioritize. Determine if the task is necessary: Take a look at the tasks you are forgetting. What is more necessary to accomplish and how

can someone help? Can you ask someone to set a reminder with you? Some bills have an option online where money can be automatically taken out of your account. Would that help you by having a few less bills to worry about playing for?

3. Strategize. Find the best

solution for you: Make tasks work for you. Don't stress yourself over accomplishing the tasks as if you were completely fine. Use automatic payments for bills that allow it and use a slow cooker if you are having trouble cooking. Make your tasks work for you, don't work for your tasks.

Self Care for Caretakers

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, caregivers of people with Alzheimer's and related dementias provide care for a longer duration than caregivers of people with other types of conditions.

It can be easy to forget about yourself when you care someone around the clock, but know that self care isn't selfish. There are options you can take to get help when you help others.

THINK ABOUT RESPITE CARE

People with Alzheimer's disease usually require around-the-clock care and help with daily tasks, sanitary tasks and other help. Most of the people caring for them are family and close friends.

Caring for someone can effect your mental and physical health but there is help for you.

Respite care allows the caregiver to have some time off from caregiving. There are multiple types of services such as in home, adult day care and even short-term nursing home care. According to research done by the CDC, even a few hours of respite a



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week can improve caregiver's well-being. Respite care can be provided by family, friends, a non-profit or a government agency. Some of these services may even be free or low-cost.

REACH OUT FOR HELP

If you are in search of some relief from your caregiving duties but don't know where

to go, look to family and friends to help you.

Identify a caregiving task or a certain time you would like help with. If there is an activity that you have been missing for caregiving duties, make your family or friends aware of this so that they can plan to provide you relief. Be understanding if you are turned down. People may not feel

very comfortable having to care for someone in such a demanding way. Offer them more time to show them how you care for the person with Alzheimer's. Don't be afraid to ask again in the future.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

Talk to your doctor if you are experiencing any signs of anxiety or depression. How

you are feeling can greatly effect the person you are caring for. You have special needs as a caregiver that your doctor should be aware of. Let your doctor know that you are looking to find respite care, they can point you in the right direction or get you in contact with a government agency or a non-profit that can help you.