

# Supporting a Loved One with Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease is often described as a "family disease" because it can dramatically change the lives not only of the people who have it, but of many people close to them. If someone close to you has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's, there are many things you can do to help you care for them—and yourself.

If someone close to you has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's, it's important to find out all you can about the condition. This will help you develop realistic expectations about your loved one's abilities and changing behavior.



To find out more information, you can:

- Read books.
- Use online resources.
- Consult with dependent care specialists.
- Check out caregiving support groups, workshops and seminars in your area.

The most important things for a caregiver to learn about are when and how to:

- Support a loved one with day-to-day activities.
- Communicate as the disease progresses.
- Manage difficult or unusual behavior.
- Keep your loved one safe.
- Manage their financial issues and make long-term care decisions.

In the early to mid stages of the disease, while your loved one is relatively independent, you can do many things to make tasks less cumbersome. Consider providing prepared meals and helping with daily chores. As the disease progresses, you may have to consider other arrangements such as enlisting the assistance of a home care professional or relocating your loved one to a long-term care facility.

## Caregiver Tips

Since each person's experience with the symptoms and progression of Alzheimer's disease differs, caregiving techniques will vary. However, it's important to understand that you will have to modify the way you interact with your loved one as the disease progresses. Know that frustration, agitation, and even aggression are common reactions when tasks or decisions become difficult. The following tips may help:

**Frequently assess the level of assistance your loved one requires.** Do they need help bathing, grooming, dressing, or completing other necessary daily activities?

**Reduce the complexity of decisions to help reduce anxiety.** Simplify deciding what to wear by offering just two clear options.

**Reduce the complexity of tasks to help reduce frustration.** Provide simple one-step-at-a-time instructions if your loved one is having difficulty with a task.

**Try to stay flexible.** Don't worry about the way things "should" or "have always" been done. If there is no danger in how a loved one chooses to do a task, refrain from correcting them.

**Be patient when communicating.** Understand that your loved one's ability to use language the way they once could will decrease as the disease progresses. It is common for people with Alzheimer's to communicate their wants and feelings more through behavior than through language.

**Create a safe environment that's appropriate for different stages of the disease.** Ensure there are clear pathways, working fire extinguishers and smoke alarms, and locked cabinets for containing medicine, toxic substances, or sharp objects.

**Plan for the future.** While dealing with today's challenges is already a lot to manage, thinking about tomorrow can help make the months and years ahead easier. Talk with your loved one about when and who will manage financial and health-related activities and future caregiving decisions.

**Be sure to take care of yourself.** Your own care is just as important as your loved one's. This means keeping yourself physically and emotionally healthy, contacting community support groups, asking friends and family for help when you need it, and not taking on more than you can reasonably handle.

**Contact Caterpillar's Global Employee Assistance Program (EAP).** The EAP has additional resources on managing stress, finding local services, staying on top of health issues, and coping with job-related issues you may face as a working caregiver. Visit [CaterpillarEAP.com](https://www.caterpillar.com/eap) or call 866-CAT(228)-0565.

Armed with knowledge about the disease, the support of friends, family, and others faced with similar issues, you will be as prepared as possible to deal with the challenges of caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's.

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