

Care Management • Eldercare Advocacy • Dementia Care



ALZHEIMER'S: WHAT TO EXPECT AS THE DISEASE PROGRESSES

The course of Alzheimer's disease can vary significantly with each individual. However, some changes are more typical, so you can reasonably expect to experience them. For example, the behavioral changes that usually dominate Stage I are joined with overriding physical problems in Stage III. Educating yourself to the flow of AD helps you communicate better with your loved one, your family and friends, and your loved one's physician.

AD systematically destroys your loved one's ability to use and rely on the critical skills and cognitive functions we develop from infancy through adulthood and take for granted, such as memory, orientation to time and place, judgment that allows us to discern right from wrong or safe from harmful, and problem solving. Your loved one will lose the instincts and memories that are needed to function safely and appropriately in all areas of living: driving, self-medicating, eating, writing, reading, cooking, interacting socially, cleaning, playing sports, grooming, and making financial or legal transactions.

Use the box to the left of each symptom to check those that apply to your loved one; check as many symptoms as you like even if cross into other stages. This information can help you create plans to keep your own mental, physical, and financial future intact.

Take this list to your loved one's physician to provide her with a clear written account of your loved one's behavior and abilities. The physician will be more able to prescribe appropriate lifestyle & medication changes that may help improve the entire family's quality of life.

Restoring Health, Dignity & Peace of Mind

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Did you know? ...

Adverse drug reactions and other medication-related problems add more than \$100 billion to U.S. healthcare costs.

Changes Commonly Experienced in Stage 1

In the early stages of AD, you can expect your loved one to show increasing memory loss about recent events, minor difficulties handling everyday matters, some disorientation to time & place, and perhaps a need for prompting with appointments, personal care or household routines. Because safe driving entails remembering how to brake, steer, reverse, park, read road signs (stop, slow, speed limits), and use landmarks to navigate, driving is considered extremely dangerous for AD patients.

Stage 1 is one of the most difficult periods: most people realize they're losing control & fight back by denying the existence of the problem. Families may attribute problems to "getting older." These denials delay diagnosis & treatment, putting the patient at more risk.

Short Term Memory Loss, Confusion, Focus: My

Loved One ...

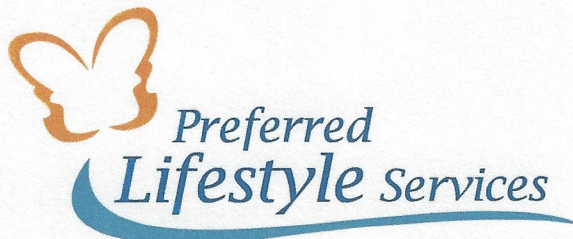
- / _ / Is beginning to forget recent experiences (yesterday, last week)
- / _ / Has trouble finding familiar places (grocery store, doctor's office)
- / _ / Has problems with sequential steps (recipes, directions)
- / _ / Has a shorter attention span, difficulty focusing on specific tasks or finishing activities.

Initiative/Self Care: My Loved One ...

- / _ / Has difficulties with decisions (menus, selecting clothing to wear)
- / _ / Has begun making inappropriate decisions (driving, financial)
- / _ / Has lost interest in hobbies, friends, and other activities.
- / _ / Is not as well groomed as she used to be (bathing, clean clothing, hair)

Personality/Mood Changes: My Loved One ...

- / _ / Has mood swings, seems depressed, gone from gentle to nasty, outgoing to reclusive
- _ / Makes excuses to avoid friends and family.



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Did you know? ...

*Falls are the leading cause of
Death & Emergency Hospital
Admissions for 65+*

Changes Commonly Experienced in Stage II

In the moderate stages of AD, your loved one will have retained fewer memories, be more severely disorientated to time & place, have great difficulty in problem solving, & unable to handle social relationships or function independently except for simple tasks. Preparations for this stage include considerations for 24-hour assistance, transportation, housing, financial and legal matters, and long-term care. Medical assistance & caregiver respite are mandatory for your loved one's safety & yours.

Increased Confusion: My Loved One ...

- / _ / Has difficulty remembering to lock the door & how to call for help
- / _ / Mixes up identities (family, friends, and deceased relatives)
- / _ / Doesn't recognize or remember the use of objects (door, chair, bed)
- / _ / Shows frustration at not being able to understand or at not being understood.

Speech/Actions: My Loved One ...

- / _ / Repeats questions, actions, statements & makes up stories to fill memory gaps
- / _ / Paces in circles or wanders from room to room.
- / _ / Often becomes unmanageable in the afternoons or evenings with verbal outbursts or physical activities such as masturbating or disrobing in public or running away.

Hygiene Changes: My Loved One ...

- / _ / Often refuses to bathe or becomes fearful when we bathe her
- / _ / Is incontinent, refuses to change clothing for extended periods of time

Sleep/Paranoia/Fear: My parent...

- / _ / Sleeps during the day & stays awake at night.
- / _ / Has accused us of trying to kill her, steal her money; has tried to bite, kick, scratch us.



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PLS Offers the answer to your most worrisome question:

“Who will help me when I cannot help myself?”

Changes Commonly Experienced in Stage III

Stage III is also known as “end-stage” Alzheimer’s, because it signifies the final years of the disease. At the end of this stage, your loved one will pass away. Assistance from a counselor at your local Alzheimer’s organization and hospice, and a physician specializing in Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias can help you and your parent enormously during this very difficult time.

Assistance: My Loved One ...

- ☐ Needs total assistance with transferring from bed to chair, eating, walking, and every activity of daily living.
- ☐ Has difficulty swallowing.
- ☐ Refuses to eat.

Memory/Speech: My Loved One ...

- ☐ No longer recognizes himself or family members.
- ☐ Rarely or never communicates.

Body and Functions: My Loved One ...

- ☐ Sleeps most of the time.
- ☐ Has had a significant weight loss.
- ☐ Is completely incontinent of bowel and bladder.

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