



**EMBARGOED UNTIL FEBRUARY 25, 2009**

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**Alzheimer's Numbers to Crest with Baby Boomer Wave**  
*Report Predicts Doubling in Number of People with Neurological Disorder*

**SACRAMENTO, CA** — The number of Californians with Alzheimer's disease will nearly double to 1.1 million by 2030, with all race and ethnic groups, as well as every region of the state, experiencing dramatic increases, according to a report released today at the State Capitol by the Alzheimer's Association.

California baby boomers age 55 and older have a one in eight lifetime risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, a progressive, irreversible neurological disorder characterized by severe memory loss, and the most common type of dementia. For Californians age 55 and above, the lifetime risk of developing a dementia of any type is one in six.

The report underscores the urgency of developing a State Alzheimer's Disease Plan in California to prepare for this dramatic increase. It illustrates a future chain reaction where the 1.1 million Californians who develop Alzheimer's will require more caregivers, which in turn will affect employers through lost work productivity while placing more strain on the state's Medi-Cal system, a major funder of nursing home and in-home care for low-income Californians. The report also contains Alzheimer's statistics for each of the state's 58 counties and paints a similarly urgent picture.

"The numbers in this report don't lie. The state of California will be greatly impacted by this disease as baby boomers age," said Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg. "Policy makers will need to work with experts and community members on a plan to lessen the impact of Alzheimer's on our citizens, economy and healthcare systems."

Titled *Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures in California: Current Status and Future Projections*, the report was funded by The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation and supported by the Alzheimer's Disease Program at the California Department of Public Health. It was prepared by the Institute for Health and Aging at U.C. San Francisco in consultation with the Alzheimer's Association.

Ultimately fatal, Alzheimer's disease is currently the sixth leading cause of death in California, according to the report. Compared to other leading causes of death in California, Alzheimer's disease showed the greatest increase from 2000 to 2004 at 58.3 percent.

"The incentives for California to create a State Alzheimer's Disease Plan could not be greater or more compelling," said Bill Fisher, CEO of the Alzheimer's Association, Northern California Chapter. "Our state is under tremendous financial pressure, and this report offers abundant proof of why the State must move quickly to prepare before the services required get out of control and bankrupt our systems. California has a financial stake in seeing improved treatments and prevention strategies for Alzheimer's patients and their caregivers, which is why the state must not only prepare for the future, but ensure there are no further cuts to current programs for Alzheimer's research and services."

Especially hard-hit will be many of California's ethnic populations, where Alzheimer's is often underreported and diagnosed at a later stage of the disease. Among ethnic communities, the report predicts Alzheimer's will double among African-Americans, and triple among those of Hispanic and Asian descent.

Meanwhile, the impact of the increase in Alzheimer's will carry a ripple effect on people providing care — most significantly on family members — and their employers. According to the report:

- 11 percent of the nation's family caregivers live in California, where 1.1 million people are already providing unpaid care for a person with Alzheimer's or related dementia — 75 percent of these family caregivers are women;
- Caregivers of people with severe memory problems or dementia spend an average of nearly 54 hours a week providing help, which leads to a disproportionate number of caregivers being forced to miss work, reduce work hours, change jobs or quit their jobs altogether; and
- Family caregivers who care for people with severe memory problems are more likely than other family caregivers to experience financial hardship, report health difficulties, experience emotional stress and suffer from sleep disturbance.

"Having spent much of my career as an advocate for older adults and their families, I am keenly aware that Alzheimer's is a major challenge for California's already overburdened healthcare system," said Assemblymember Mariko Yamada. "The release of this report serves as urgent confirmation that the State must put a plan in place as soon as possible, and I commit to being part of that effort."

And then there is the cost. During the next 20 years, the total cost of caring for people with Alzheimer's disease in California who live in the community, where their care is provided and paid for by family members, is expected to increase by 49 percent, or from the current \$50.5 billion to \$98.8 billion. While less than 6 percent of people living with Alzheimer's disease reside in skilled nursing facilities that cost increase will also jump from a current \$16 billion to more than an estimated \$31 billion by 2030. With many families unable to pay these costs over the often long course of the disease, that increase will fall on the state and federal government, and from there, onto taxpayers.

The report's findings underscore the need to intensify research efforts. The facts indicate that by delaying onset of the debilitating symptoms of Alzheimer's by just five years, prevalence rates could be cut in half. A decline in the number of people being treated for dementia can result in a parallel decline in the burden on Medi-Cal — and on taxpayers.

"The numbers in this report tell us the worst is yet to come, but only if we do little or nothing. The data sends a clear message that we must develop a State Alzheimer's Disease Plan that will inform state policy makers on how we can change the future to make a difference in the lives of people living with this tragic disease, as well as their families and businesses," Fisher said.

The Alzheimer's Association's five California chapters are part of the national Alzheimer's Association. The mission of the Alzheimer's Association is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research, to enhance care and support for all affected, and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. It is the largest private funder of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias research. For more information and to download a copy of the report, visit [www.alz.org/cadata](http://www.alz.org/cadata).

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