

Services You May Need

There are many types of services available to assist you throughout the course of Alzheimer's disease. Although you may not need all these services immediately after receiving a diagnosis, it's important to identify what's available in your community. Call your local chapter of the Alzheimer's Association to find resources in your area.

Medical Services. Families report they are most satisfied with a specialist who is well informed about Alzheimer's disease. This may be a neurologist, geriatrician, psychiatrist or a family doctor who is experienced in treating people with the disease.

Legal Services. Legal planning should begin soon after a diagnosis has been made. Planning should involve putting together documents that authorize another person to make health care and financial decisions, including plans for long term care coverage.

An attorney can explain issues related to durable power of attorney for health care and finances, living wills and trusts, future medical care, housing and other key considerations. There are elder law attorneys who specialize in issues affecting older adults.

If the person with Alzheimer's has the legal capacity – the level of mental functioning necessary to sign official documents – he or she should actively participate in legal planning.

Financial Services. Important financial decisions will have to be made throughout the course of the disease. Attorneys, accounts and financial planners can help. If possible, include the person with Alzheimer's in the discussions.

Financial assistance and health care benefits may be obtained through several government sources. There are two types of entitlement programs that persons with Alzheimer's may apply for:

those that provide income and those that help pay for medical expenses. Some of these include Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income, General Public Assistance, Medicare and Medicaid. Contact the government agency involved directly or your local Alzheimer's Association chapter for information.

Helpline. The Alzheimer's Association Helpline is staffed by trained volunteers experienced in issues related to the disease. Helpline specialists are available to offer ongoing support, suggest tips for caregiving and provide specific information on resources that may help you.

Helpline telephone: 800-272-3900

Support Groups. Your local chapter of the Alzheimer's Association also provides support groups for caregivers and family members throughout the disease process. In some cases, support groups may be available for persons with the disease. You can talk with others who are experiencing similar situations in a safe, non-judgmental group setting.

Information. You can find information on everything from diagnosis and treatment to caregiving and support groups through the Alzheimer's Association. Most chapters make available an extensive collection of brochures, books and videos. You can also find information on the Association's web site at www.alz.org.

As the disease progresses, you may need help with providing care. Care services generally fall into the categories of respite care, residential care and hospice. The Alzheimer's Association can assist you in determining what type of care is available in your community.

Respite Care refers to a short time of rest or relief. It allows caregivers a break from the day-to-day duties and provides the person with Alzheimer's opportunities to interact with others. Three types of respite care most commonly available are:

- **Day Services.** Programs in adult day centers can give the person with Alzheimer's an opportunity to socialize with others exercise and engage in simple activities.
- **Home Care.** Visiting nurses, home health aides, homemakers and volunteers can provide services at home such as bathing, dressing or companionship while you go out for a while.
- **Residential Respite.** Some hospitals, nursing homes and other residential facilities offer short-term stays of a few days or a few weeks.

Residential Care. The type of residential care you may need will probably vary depending on the stage of the disease. Housing services are generally grouped in two categories:

- **Assisted Living.** Also known as board and care homes, assisted living is a term for residential care settings that combine housing, personalized supportive services and health care. These settings offer more services than independent living but fewer than a skilled nursing facility.

- **Skilled Nursing.** Also known as nursing home care, this type of care provides an intermediate or skilled nursing setting for those who require more services. Some are designed to provide specialized care for persons with dementia.

Hospice Services. Designed to help people near the end of life, hospice programs combine at-home and skilled nursing services. Today, more hospices are offering specialized programs for persons with Alzheimer's disease.

Other Support Services. Other support services may be available from your local Department on Aging, Department of Health, and Senior Citizens. Agency, Religious-affiliated service agencies and patient education departments of hospitals. Also private physicians, social workers, nurses, psychologists and counselors may provide such services.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

If You Have Alzheimer's Disease: What You Should Know, What You Should Do

Especially for the Alzheimer Caregiver

Steps to Understanding Financial Issues: Resources for Caregivers

Steps to Understanding Financial Issues: Resources for Individuals with Alzheimer's Disease

Steps to Understanding Legal Issues: Planning for the Future