

When Your Spouse Has Alzheimer's Disease

1. Learn all you can about Alzheimer's disease. It will help you be prepared, reduce risk of crisis and empower you to help your loved one maintain a higher functional ability for a longer period of time.
2. Share the diagnosis with trusted friends, family and others that you are in regular contact with such as neighbors and your faith community.
3. Tell your family and friends how they can help. Be specific. Begin to include regular help earlier rather than later. Include all things that might help, for example if a family member does not feel comfortable staying with the person with the disease, have them go to the store for you or mow your lawn.
4. Do not feel you have to hide the disease. Using business cards discreetly that say: "My companion has Alzheimer's disease, please be patient" may help to diffuse uncomfortable public situations.
5. Maintain regular contact with supportive friends. Maintain individual activities that bring you relief or enjoyment such as exercise or a club involvement. Do not give up all the social kinds of activities you enjoy or you will place yourself at higher risk of depression and burnout.
6. Accept what your spouse can and cannot do. To do otherwise will only add to your problems.
7. Accept the array of feelings that you will have.
8. Forgive yourself for losing patience. You are only human.
9. Decisions must be based on realistic needs and a careful assessment of risks and benefits. Making decisions based on guilt or not making necessary decisions due to grief will not serve either you or the person with the disease.
10. Know the resources available. Timely inclusion of help and resources through the disease can lengthen a person's ability to remain at home and can reduce risks of depression in both the individual with the disease and the care partner.
11. Humorous things will happen. It is not only okay, but useful to laugh.
12. Whether needs include accepting help in the home or out of home placement, you have not failed. The only failure would be to abandon the person. Just because someone is helping with care does not mean that they do not need or benefit from your presence, advocacy and support.
13. There are no perfect solutions regarding the problems caused by memory disorders and you should not keep questioning the action you took. If you had selected another course of action, you would have had doubts about the 'rightness' of that also.
14. Expect some friends and family not to understand some of your decisions and behavior. Having family meetings early and keeping family and friends informed of what is going on can reduce some of the inevitable difference of opinions. Trying to "protect" children by not telling them about problems or challenges likely will complicate the situation in the long run.
15. Intimacy can be affected in a number of ways. While this is an uncomfortable topic to discuss, it is common. There is an additional handout that might be useful for your review. If questions or concerns, feel free to discuss with an Alzheimer's Association staff member.
16. No one will understand better than others going through the same thing. Consider attending an Alzheimer's support group.



How to Contact the Alzheimer's Association – Heart of America Chapter
1.800.272.3900 • alz.org/kansascity

**Main
Office**

3846 W. 75th Street
Prairie Village, KS 66208

**Northeast Kansas
Regional Office**

3625 SW 29th St.
Suite 102
Topeka, KS 66614

**Northwest Missouri Regional
Office**

10th and Faraon
St. Joseph, MO 64501

**Southeast Kansas
Regional Office**

2601 Gabriel
Parsons, KS 67357

The Heart of America Chapter provides programs and services in 66 counties in Kansas and Missouri. These programs and services are made possible thanks to generous donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations. Contributions and donations allow the Chapter to provide supportive services, including care consultations, free of charge to individuals and families.