

Getting the Answers You Need about Alzheimer's Disease

Today more Americans have an increased awareness of Alzheimer's disease than ever before. It's unusual to meet someone without a family member or friend with Alzheimer's, or who has no connection to someone who has been touched by the disease. We all know of someone in our inner circles who has been affected.

What the current data shows

The Alzheimer's Association's *2010 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures* estimates that there are as many as 5.3 million Americans living with Alzheimer's. This includes 5.1 million people age 65 and over and 200,000 people under age 65 with younger onset Alzheimer's disease. By 2050, up to 16 million will have Alzheimer's disease unless something is done to eliminate Alzheimer's.

Alzheimer's is not a typical part of aging; it gets worse over time and it is fatal. African Americans are twice as likely as whites to have Alzheimer's, and Latinos are 1.5 times more likely than whites to develop the disease. Today it is the seventh-leading cause of death in the United States. There is currently no cure for Alzheimer's, but new treatments are on the horizon as a result of accelerating insight into the biology of the disease. Research has also shown that effective care and support can improve quality of life for individuals and their caregivers over the course of the disease from diagnosis to the end of life.

What can you do to become better informed?

With the increased awareness of Alzheimer's there is a greater emphasis being placed on educating families and caregivers about the disease, and providing the information, support and access to resources that families and caregivers need.

In the past Alzheimer's was something that people didn't openly discuss. There was much misinformation, and confusion about what was normal aging versus Alzheimer's, or how to recognize symptoms that mean it's time to see your doctor, and what to do if you get a diagnosis of Alzheimer's or a related dementia. Today there is information available 24 hours a day through the Alzheimer's Association Helpline as well as through the association website. You can speak directly to a knowledgeable professional by picking up the phone and dialing the Helpline whenever you have a question or concern related to memory loss, and get reliable information, understanding, and help; or, if you prefer getting information on-line, you can do your own research through the website.

There are support groups you can attend if you have memory loss, or if someone you care about has it. The Western and Central Washington State Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association has an Annual Education Conference, and an Annual African American Caregiver's Forum, as well as other events and activities throughout the year. Care Consultants can meet you in your home or at the Alzheimer's Association, and these services can be provided with a Spanish-speaking consultant.

If you need more information, you can connect with the Alzheimer's Association by calling 1.800.848.7097, or visiting the website at www.alzwa.org.