

# Caregiver Assistance News

*"Caring for You - Caring for Others"*

**Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike,  
Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

**www.aaa7.org** **Helping You Age Better!**



**AUGUST 2015**

## Alzheimer's Disease Stages

Alzheimer's disease (AD) symptoms don't occur in the same order in all people and everyone with AD does not get all of the symptoms. It is important to understand that the effects of Alzheimer's change over time. Caregiving responsibilities will change as well. The following list of some of the changes that usually occur at each stage is meant to give you a general idea of what to expect and how to better care for the person with AD.

### **Early Stage - Mild AD**

The person appears physically the same and may handle casual conversations almost normally, but forgets names and events shortly after they happen and may lose zest for life and feel depressed.

- Difficulty starting activities.
- Difficulty learning new things and making new memories.
- Trouble finding words - may substitute or make up words that sound like or mean something like the forgotten word. May talk less to avoid making mistakes.
- Shorter attention span and less ability to stay with an activity.
- May lose their way going to a familiar place.
- May resist change.
- Has trouble organizing and thinking logically.
- Asks repetitive questions.
- Withdraws, is irritable, is less sensitive to others' feelings.
- Difficulty making decisions; for example, when asked what they want to eat, says "I'll have what she is having."
- Takes longer to do routine chores and becomes upset if rushed.
- May forget to pay, pays too much, or forgets how to pay.
- Forgets to eat, eats only one kind of food, or eats constantly.
- Loses or misplaces things by hiding them in odd places or forgets where things go, such as placing clothes in the dishwasher; constantly checks, searches, or hoards things of no value.

### **Middle Stage - Moderate AD**

Behavioral and psychological symptoms occur and poor judgment creates safety issues when left alone - may wander and be at risk of exposure, poisoning, falls, self-neglect, or exploitation. Needs help finding the toilet, using the shower, remembering to drink, and dressing for the weather or the occasion.

- Less concern for personal hygiene.
- Mixes up identity of people, such as thinking a wife is a stranger.

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## *Continued from Page 1*

- Has trouble recognizing familiar people and possessions; may take things that belong to others.
- Repeats stories, words, or movements - such as tearing tissues.
- Has restless, repetitive movements in late afternoon or evening, such as pacing, trying doorknobs, fingering draperies.
- Cannot organize thoughts or follow logical explanations.
- Makes up stories to fill in gaps in memory. For example, might say, "Mama will come for me when she gets off work."
- May be able to read but may not understand the content.
- May accuse, threaten, curse, fidget or behave inappropriately, such as kicking, hitting, biting, screaming or grabbing.
- May forget traditional table manners.
- May see, hear, smell, or taste things that are not there (hallucinations).
- May accuse spouse of an affair or others of stealing.
- Sleep patterns change, e.g., naps frequently or awakens at night believing it is time to go to work.
- Has more difficulty positioning the body to use the toilet or sit in a chair.
- May be incontinent either all or some of the time.
- Exhibits inappropriate sexual behavior, perhaps mistaking another individual for a spouse.

### **Late Stage - Severe AD**

Needs total assistance for all activities of daily living; becomes bedridden.

- Doesn't recognize themselves or close family.
- Speaks, but it is difficult or impossible to understand the content or may become mute, or repetitively cry out.
- May refuse to eat, forgets to chew and swallow.
- Bowel and bladder control is lost.
- Forgets how to walk or is too unsteady or weak to stand alone.
- Loses weight and skin becomes thin and tears easily.
- May look uncomfortable or cry out when transferred or touched.
- May develop muscle contractures (tightening that cause pain).
- May have seizures, frequent infections, falls.

**Source: Adapted from *The Comfort of Home® for Alzheimer's Disease***

## **Alzheimer's/Dementia Lunch and Learn for Families**

September 22nd - Highland County (Highland County Senior Center in Hillsboro) 11:30 am - 1:00 pm  
"Understanding Behavior"

October 13th - Scioto County (Best Care Nursing and Rehab Center in Wheelersburg) 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm  
"Understanding Behavior"

November 19th - Jackson County (Jenkins Care Community in Wellston) 12 Noon - 1:30 pm  
"Open Discussion" (Group will choose topic)

**For more information or to register, call Melissa Dever with the Alzheimer's Association at (740) 710-1821**

*"Hate harms the hated, but destroys the hater." - Thomas Hobbes*

# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

## Caring for a Difficult Alzheimer's Patient

Even the most difficult person needs to have good access to healthcare. But doing this challenging task may take a toll on the caregiver. To protect oneself from negative feelings, it is important to determine the underlying reasons for the person's unpleasant behavior. Whether it is due to anger, pain or helplessness, one will be able to uncover the root cause of the problem with patience and gentle questioning. Still, a caregiver should never let himself or herself be bullied. He should always be calm, but firm, in speaking up when disallowing unreasonable demands, especially if the person's health or safety is at risk. It is also important to take time out from caregiving duties before stress becomes too much to bear.



# Live Life Laughing



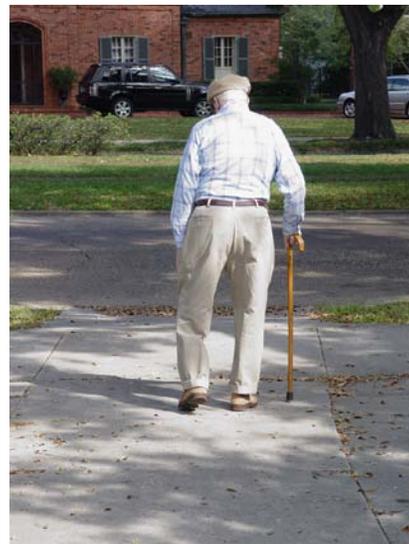
"My knee hurts."

"Well, you are getting older."

"But my other knee is the same age!"

## Don't Fall - Be Safe!

People with Alzheimer's Disease are at greater risk of falls. With increased memory impairment and poor decision making skills, they try to walk independently when told it is not safe to do so.



## Grief Support Group - Jackson County

Monthly Grief Support Group at Four Winds Community in Jackson, located at 215 Seth Avenue. Meetings are from 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm.

September 14 • October 12  
November 9 • December 14

This is a free community service. Please RSVP to (740) 285-7813 or call with any questions.





**Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

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## Safety Tips - *Wandering*

It's common for a person with Alzheimer's or a related dementia to wander and become lost. Many do so repeatedly. This can be dangerous, even life threatening. The stress can weigh heavily on family and caregivers. MedicAlert® + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return® is a 24-hour nationwide emergency response service for individuals with Alzheimer's or a related dementia who wander or have a medical emergency. They provide 24-hour assistance, no matter when or where the person is reported missing.

A caregiver or family member can enroll a person with dementia into the Alzheimer's Association's Safe Return® program by submitting an enrollment form with a \$55 plus a \$7 shipping and handling enrollment fee for the package. For an additional \$35, optional matching caregiver jewelry is available, which will alert others to look after the person with dementia should the caregiver become disabled. After one year, there is a \$35 annual administration fee.



Call 1-888-572-8566 or visit [medicalert.org/safereturn](http://medicalert.org/safereturn) for more information.