

# Living Well With Dementia in the Community

Resources and Support



**A**mericans are living longer than ever before, and the rapidly growing older adult population is expected to reach 73 million people by the year 2030. While longer lifespans bring great opportunities, older adults face an increased risk of developing a chronic condition or cognitive disorder. If you or a loved one is experiencing changes in self-management abilities, judgement or behavior, it is important to recognize the differences between normal aging-related changes and something more serious like dementia.

One in 10 people age 65 and older lives with some form of dementia, the most common of which is Alzheimer’s disease. Sixty percent of people with dementia live in their homes and in the community. **While living with the condition can be difficult, people with dementia and their caregivers can have independent, high-quality lives—especially when they are connected to local community services and supports.** Fortunately, there is more support for people with dementia and their caregivers than ever before.

## What is Dementia?

According to the Alzheimer’s Association ([www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)), dementia is a general term that describes a range of symptoms an individual experiences that are associated with a decline in memory and mental ability that are severe enough to interfere with daily life. While each person with dementia is affected differently, symptoms include memory loss, language difficulty, a loss of motor function and difficulty problem solving. **Although there is currently no cure for dementia, early detection and treatment can greatly improve quality of life.**

### How Do Signs of Dementia Differ from the Typical Aging Process?

Many of dementia’s symptoms can be confused with the normal aging process. But for people with dementia, these symptoms can change and accelerate over time, depending on the stage of dementia a person is in. The chart on the right differentiates signs of dementia from what many would classify to be characteristic of the aging process.

TYPICAL AGE-RELATED CHANGES	SIGNS OF DEMENTIA
Making a bad decision once in a while	Poor judgment and decision-making
Missing a monthly payment	Inability to manage a budget
Forgetting which day it is and remembering it later	Losing track of the date or the season
Sometimes forgetting which word to use	Difficulty having a conversation
Losing things from time to time	Misplacing things and being unable to retrace steps to find them

Source: Alzheimer’s Association, 10 Early Signs and Symptoms of Alzheimer’s



# If You Suspect That You or a Loved One Has Dementia...

## Seek Medical Advice

Reversible conditions—dehydration, thyroid issues and vitamin deficiencies, among others—can cause symptoms similar to dementia. If you suspect that you or a loved one is showing signs of dementia, the first step is to see a medical doctor who can make an assessment, possibly provide a diagnosis and make referrals to specialists such as a neurologist who can provide further information and care. **Early detection is vital.** Going to the doctor as soon as you or your loved one suspects dementia can speed access to essential treatments and other resources that may slow the progress of dementia and extend the period of time individuals living with dementia can stay in their homes and communities.

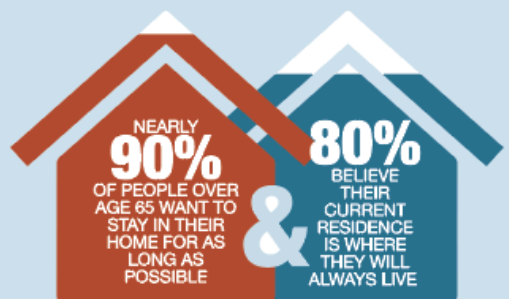
## Learn About Dementia

After receiving a dementia diagnosis, many people want to learn all they can about what living with dementia means. Because symptoms of dementia change over time, an individual's needs change depending on the stage of dementia they are in. Resources available from the Alzheimer's Association, Dementia Friendly America and others (see Resources section on the back panel) help people with dementia continue living independently in their homes and communities for years.

## Dementia by the Numbers



## 15 MILLION AMERICANS PROVIDE 18.2 BILLION HOURS OF UNPAID CARE TO PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA





## Explore Local Community Services and Supports

For many, living at home and in the community will require supportive services to maintain independence and increase well-being, and this is especially important for people living with dementia. The Eldercare Locator connects people with dementia and their caregivers to a wide range of services. In doing so, people with dementia can live independently in their communities for as long as possible. Visit [www.eldercare.acl.gov](http://www.eldercare.acl.gov) or call (800) 677-1116.

The following types of home and community-based services are available in most parts of the country. Depending on income and local availability, these services may be paid for with federal or state funding or may need to be paid out-of-pocket.

### Supportive Services

- **Transportation:** Rides to medical appointments and mobility management training to help older adults navigate public transportation
- **In-Home Services:** Personal care and other supportive services such as help with bathing, dressing, grooming, light housework and home-delivered meals
- **Home modifications or repairs** that enable older adults to remain safely their homes
- **Adult Day Care:** Supervised social or medical care provided in a setting outside the home
- **Professional or “friendly volunteer” visitors** to maintain social engagement
- **Legal services, elder abuse prevention programs and Adult Protective Services**

## Memory Cafés

Memory cafés are popping up across the country. Often located in central community locations—coffee houses, libraries and houses of faith, to name a few—memory cafés offer a welcoming, safe, supportive, engaging environment for people with dementia and caregivers alike. People attending memory cafés benefit from conversation and shared activities with individuals who are sharing their experience, in social and accepting settings.



## Health, Wellness and Social Activities

- Events and classes offered through senior centers and other community-based organizations that promote engagement and reduce social isolation such as memory cafés (see panel)
- Programs to prevent falls, manage chronic diseases and promote health and well-being
- Health insurance and Medicare counseling

## Programs for Caregivers

Those who provide support to individuals who have dementia face a unique set of challenges and often need support themselves. The Aging Network and dementia-specific organizations such as the Alzheimer's Association can connect caregivers to local resources, such as:

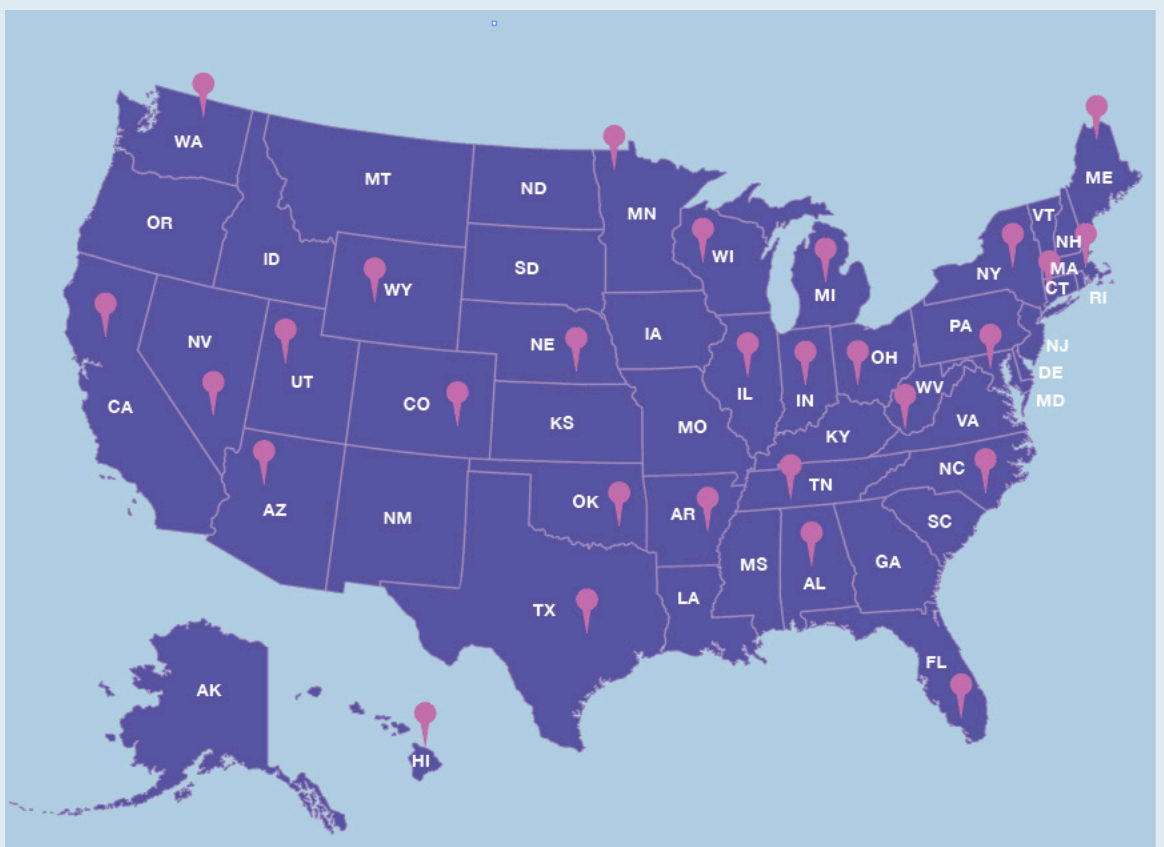
- Support groups with other family caregivers, either in person or online (e.g., the Alzheimer's Association's ALZConnected at [www.alzconnected.org](http://www.alzconnected.org))
- Training for caregivers on health, nutrition and financial literacy
- Evidence-based trainings designed to help caregivers manage the behavioral symptoms that may accompany dementia (e.g., Powerful Tools for Caregivers, REACH, SAVVY Caregiver)
- Respite care to enable caregivers to be temporarily relieved of their caregiving responsibilities or allow them to attend caregiver trainings
- Supplemental services to better help caregivers manage their role (e.g., assistive technology, equipment)
- Technology solutions to support health and safety



# Dementia Friendly America

Every part of the community can play a role in making life easier for people living with dementia and their caregivers. Already there are dozens of Dementia Friendly Communities in 28 states. And many sectors—banks, places of worship, law enforcement, local governments, businesses and first responders—can take steps to become “dementia friendly” by adopting practices to support people with dementia and their caregivers.

To find out how you can help make your community more dementia friendly, visit Dementia Friendly America ([www.dfamerica.org](http://www.dfamerica.org)). In addition, individuals can learn about dementia by becoming a Dementia Friend ([www.dementiafriends.usa.org](http://www.dementiafriends.usa.org)), which simply involves watching a few short videos that explain dementia and how to best interact with people living with dementia.



## Communicating Well With People With Dementia

- Greet people warmly even if you think they do not remember you. If they seem confused, remind them who you are.
- Slow the pace of conversation slightly and allow time for the person to process and respond.
- Speak clearly and calmly; be patient and understanding.
- Keep communication simple; ask one question at a time.
- Listen with empathy and seek to understand the person's reality or feelings.
- Connect on an emotional level even if conversation topics shift or do not make sense to you.
- Be aware of the person's and your body language: smile, make eye contact at eye level.
- Enjoy spending time with the person in the present moment.
- Offer hugs and hand-holding as appropriate.
- Avoid arguing with or embarrassing the person.
- Treat the person with dignity and respect.

## Projected Changes Between 2014 and 2025 in Alzheimer's Disease Prevalence by State



Source: Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures 2014



# Resources

## Eldercare Locator

The only national information and referral resource to provide support to consumers across the spectrum of issues affecting older Americans.

[www.eldercare.acl.gov](http://www.eldercare.acl.gov) and (800) 677-1116



Connecting You to Community Services

## National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)

The mission of n4a is to build the capacity of Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI Native American aging programs so they can better help older adults and people with disabilities live with dignity and choices in their homes and communities.

[www.n4a.org](http://www.n4a.org)



advocacy | action | answers on aging

## Alzheimer's Association

The leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research.

[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)



## Alzheimer's Association's Community Resource Finder

This tool provides a comprehensive listing of Alzheimer's and dementia resources, community programs and services.

[www.communityresourcefinder.org](http://www.communityresourcefinder.org)

## Dementia Friendly America

Through the work of more than 35 national, leading organizations, the Dementia Friendly America initiative is catalyzing a movement to more effectively support and serve those across America who are living with dementia and their family and friend care partners.

[www.dfamerica.org](http://www.dfamerica.org)



## Dementia Friends USA

A global movement that is changing the way people think, act and talk about dementia. Developed by the Alzheimer's Society in the U.K., the Dementia Friends initiative in the U.S. is administered by n4a.

[www.dementiafriendsusa.org](http://www.dementiafriendsusa.org)



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