

Alzheimer's Disease: Tips for Maintaining a Normal Life

Living with Alzheimer's disease is a challenge for anyone. It's difficult to remember things, make decisions, and find your way around the way you used to. It can be frustrating a good deal of the time, but there are good days and bad days. Here are some helpful tips and things you can do to make things easier for yourself -- to make things feel a bit more normal again.

How Do I Cope With My Memory Problems?

To help cope with memory problems:

- Always keep a book with you to record important information, phone numbers, names, ideas you have, appointments, your address, and directions to your home.
- Place sticky notes around the house when you need to remember things.
- Label cupboards and drawers with words or pictures that describe their contents.
- Place important phone numbers in large print next to the phone.
- Ask a friend or family member to call and remind you of important things that you need to do in the day, like meal times, medication times, and appointments.
- Use a calendar to keep track of time and to remember important dates.
- Use photos of people you see often labeled with their names.
- Keep track of phone messages by using an answering machine.

What's the Best Way to Plan the Day?

In planning your day:

- Find things to do that you enjoy and are able to do safely on your own.
- It will be easier to accomplish tasks during the times of the day when you feel best.
- Allow yourself the time to do the things you need to do, and don't feel rushed or let other people rush you.
- If something gets too difficult, take a break.

- Ask for help if you need it.

How Do I Avoid Getting Lost?

To keep from getting lost:

- Ask someone to go with you when you go out.
- Ask for help if you need it and explain that you have a memory problem.
- Always take directions for where you're going with you.

What Will Make Communicating Easier?

Communicating with others will be easier if you:

- Always take your time, and don't feel rushed.
- If you need to, ask the person you're speaking with to repeat what he/she is saying or to speak slowly if you do not understand.
- Avoid distracting noises, and find a quiet place to talk.

What About Driving?

Driving can be of particular concern for Alzheimer's patients. Here are some things to consider:

- Have someone else drive you where you need to go.
- If you tend to get lost or confused easily, consider alternative modes of transportation.
- Drive only in areas that are familiar to you.
- Contact organizations like the Alzheimer's Association to learn what local transportation services are available.
- The Department of Motor Vehicles will assess your driving skills if you're not sure whether you should drive.
- At some point, it may no longer be safe for you to drive.

How Do I Take Care of Myself at Home?

To make sure you are well taken care of at home, put some of these measures into place early so they become routine:

- Local Alzheimer organizations or your doctor will be able to tell you how to get help with things like shopping, housekeeping, meals (including home-delivered meals), and transportation.
- Ask a neighbor you trust to keep a set of house keys.
- Ask a friend or family member to help you to organize your closets and drawers to make it easier for you to find things.
- Ask a family member to check things out around the house, such as electrical appliances, mail, and perishable food items.
- Keep a list of important and emergency numbers by the phone.
- Have family, friends, or a community service program call or visit daily to ensure that everything is all right.
- Ask someone to check your smoke alarm regularly.

How Do I Maintain My Responsibilities?

- Arrange for direct deposit of checks, such as your retirement pension or Social Security benefits.
- Inform your bank if you have difficulty keeping track of your accounts and record keeping. They may provide special services for people who have Alzheimer's.

It is important to realize that at some point, it will become too difficult or dangerous for you to live by yourself. But, in the earliest stages of the disease, many people do manage on their own -- with support and help from friends, family, and community programs and with simple adjustments and safety practices in place.

Courtesy: <http://www.webmd.com/alzheimers/living-with-08/memory-tips>

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