

# Understanding Early Stage Alzheimer's

Mild Alzheimer's, which refers to the early stage, consists of people of any age who have mild impairment. During this stage, some people are unaware that they have Alzheimer's.

Common symptoms in the early stage of Alzheimer's include forgetfulness, communication difficulties, changes in thinking and learning abilities, as well as changes in mood and behaviour. The following are some tips for understanding and communicating with individuals who exhibit symptoms of mild Alzheimer's:



- Avoid correcting them. They know better but sometimes information is not available to them at a given moment.
- Remember that their feelings are intact and can easily be hurt.
- They usually know when they say the wrong thing but are just as surprised as you.
- They need people to speak a little slowly, especially on the telephone.
- Try to ignore off-hand remarks that they would not have made in the past.
- They may say something that is real to them but may not be factual. Arguing will not solve anything.
- If they put clothes on the floor or elsewhere, it may be because they cannot find them in the closet.
- Do not draw attention to them if they are having trouble. Try to carefully and discreetly help them through it.
- They can get lost easily in large group settings so keep an eye on them. Do not shadow their every move, rather use gentle respect to guide them.
- Be patient. They do not mean to frustrate you by repeating things.
- Do not assume that you know what they think or want. Always ask.
- They may have trouble showing it but they still love you.

Learning about the experiences of people living with Alzheimer's is often helpful to anyone who cares for and supports them. A diagnosis affects more than just the individual; it can be difficult for anyone involved. Because Alzheimer's is progressive, anyone involved will continue to need more information and support. It is a good idea to take time in the early stage to think about what is important in the years ahead, like additional in-home support. Learning about how Alzheimer's progresses and the changes it brings can help when making plans for the future.

*Adapted from Alzheimer Society Canada.*