



# Benefits of an early diagnosis

People with dementia can live meaningful and productive lives for many years after an early diagnosis. Dementia diagnosed early helps both the person and family members to learn about the disease, set realistic expectations and plan for their future together. There are many benefits to an early diagnosis. Here are our top 10:

## ■ Getting an accurate diagnosis

Conditions such as depression, thyroid disease, infections or drug interactions sometimes produce symptoms similar to those of dementia. A thorough medical assessment can lead to an accurate diagnosis so that appropriate treatment can begin.

## ■ Being actively involved in health care and personal decisions

Earlier in the process, the person is able to participate more actively in their own health-care decisions and future plans.

## ■ Using medications effectively

Treatment of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias is typically most effective when started early in the disease process.

## ■ Focusing on what's important

An early diagnosis allows the person to set priorities based on what is important to them, such as travelling, pursuing new goals, or deciding when to stop working.

## ■ Making choices is empowering

An early diagnosis allows the person with dementia to make informed decisions about legal, financial and care matters and make their wishes known to their family and friends.

## ■ Taking advantage of resources

The person and their family can benefit from local Alzheimer Society information, support and education programs to learn how to live well with dementia.

## ■ Supporting families

Families who understand the disease and the challenges that come with its progression are better able to support the person with dementia and get the help that's right for them.

## ■ Advocating

People with dementia can make their voices heard to raise awareness about the disease, the need for quality care and increased funding for research.

## ■ Advancing research

People with dementia can participate in clinical trials and other research to help improve diagnosis and enhance care.

## ■ Reducing stigma

People with dementia can continue to live life to the fullest. Sharing experiences of living with dementia can be very helpful in reducing the stigma of the disease and in encouraging others to reach out for support.

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*The Alzheimer Society of Canada acknowledges the Alzheimer's & Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin for their website content, which has been modified with permission.*

