

10 THINGS

EVERY FAMILY SHOULD DO WHEN GIVEN A DIAGNOSIS OF DEMENTIA

IF YOU'VE BEEN DIAGNOSED:

- 1. Open up to your inner circle.**
Talk to trusted family members and friends about how and when to share your diagnosis. While this step might be scary, it can be empowering and may open up connections and additional sources of support. Community is healthy, so share the journey.
- 2. Find support.** There is life after diagnosis. Joining a support group of others who are in a similar stage of the disease may show you new ways of coping and remaining active. [Your local Alzheimer's Association chapter](#), doctor's office, or place of worship can help locate a group.
- 3. Plan for financial and legal matters.**
The sooner you discuss these plans with family and professionals, the more say you have over your future. With the help of your care partner, [prepare for long-term care needs](#), make financial and property arrangements, and name a trusted individual to make decisions on your behalf in the future.
- 4. Create structure.** Daily and weekly schedules can help you maintain healthy habits. Discuss with your care partner what gives you purpose—whether that's engaging in old hobbies or exploring new talents—and how you can continue to incorporate these activities into your life.
- 5. Stay in touch with your doctors.**
It's important to keep your medical team apprised of any new symptoms or changes in mood, and seek psychological treatment if possible. There is no cure for the disease, but there are therapies available to improve quality of life for you and your family.

IF YOU ARE THE CAREGIVER:

- 1. Get support.** This is a life-changing journey, so walk it with others who understand it, whether you meet through social networks online or in support groups. Look to family, friends and neighbors for help, and be specific about how they can support you—whether it's by providing transportation to appointments, engaging your loved one socially, or simply being there to listen.
- 2. Collect important documents.**
Assemble a binder with your loved one's papers and make sure they are all in order. Consider consulting an elder law attorney about long-term care and estate planning and whether your loved one is eligible for [benefits](#).
- 3. Chart a roadmap.** Together with your loved one, discuss future plans and specific signs that may necessitate a move to a higher level of care, whether by hiring help in-home or moving into long-term memory care. Discuss how to ensure physical and financial safety, including when to limit or discontinue driving and managing household finances.
- 4. Stay by their side.** Make sure you or another trusted person accompanies your loved one to every doctor's visit. Keep a record of those meetings and any private discussions you may have with the doctor.
- 5. Make and take time out for yourself.**
It's impossible to be on call 24/7 for a person with the complex care needs that go along with a dementia diagnosis. You cannot care for them if you are not caring for yourself. Schedule time to tend to your own physical, mental and spiritual needs. A few minutes a day can make a difference.

