



When considering any treatment, it is important to consult with your doctor or qualified health-care professional.

When considering using any product, including a natural health product, consider and discuss these questions with your health-care professional.

1. What are the potential benefits or results of taking this product?
2. Is this the best product or approach
3. to achieve those results or are there better alternatives?
4. What is the evidence that supports the safety and effectiveness of this product?
5. What are the risks associated with taking this product?

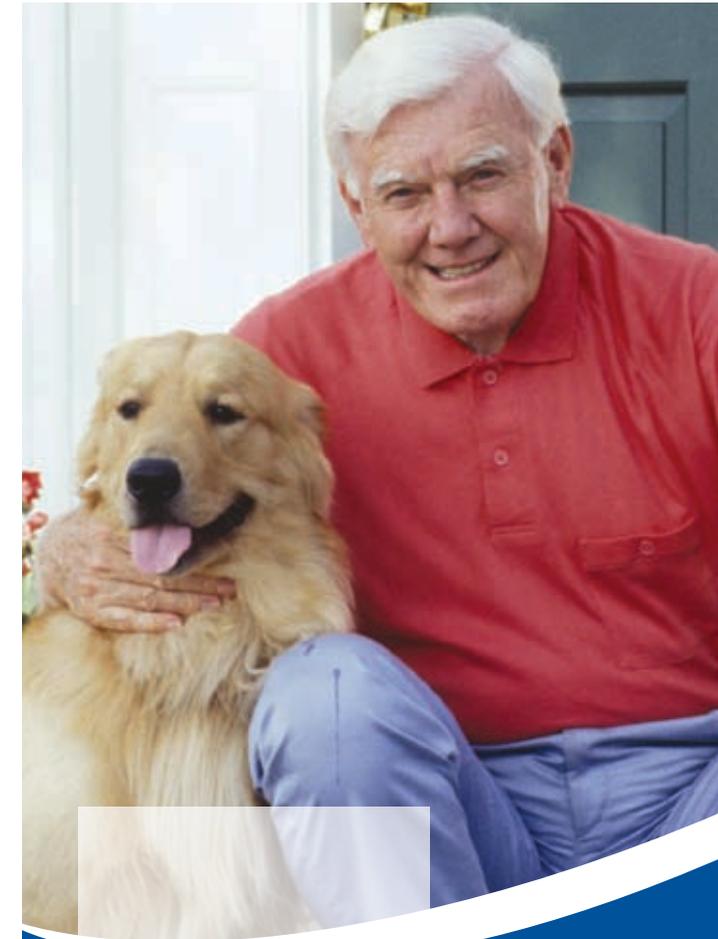
Ongoing communication with your health-care professional is important to ensure that the best treatment options are being considered, to discuss side-effects and other issues, and to ensure that the treatment is effective and appropriate for you or the person you are caring for.

### Additional information and Resources:

Available from your local Alzheimer Society or at [www.alzheimer.ca](http://www.alzheimer.ca)

- Information Sheets on Reminyl™, Exelon™, Aricept™, and Ebixa®: detailed information on each medication including possible benefits and side effects.
- Clinical Trials and Research Studies: information about specific clinical trials and research studies that are recruiting volunteers, underway or recently completed.
- Heads Up for Healthier Living: information on lifestyle choices that can improve the quality of life for people living with Alzheimer's disease and may help to slow the progression of the disease.
- A Report on Alzheimer's Disease and Current Research written by the scientific director of the Alzheimer Society of Canada: extensive information for the general public on known risk factors, current treatments, and recent research into new treatments and the search for a cure.
- First Steps information specifically for individuals with the disease to help them cope with the changes they are experiencing, plan for the future and live life to the fullest.

## Alzheimer's disease Treatment options



The Alzheimer Society advocates for people living with Alzheimer's and related diseases across Canada. The Society believes everyone living with these diseases should have access to treatments that enhance their quality of life.

The Alzheimer Society is a national not-for-profit health organization dedicated to helping people affected by Alzheimer's and related diseases. The Society has numerous resources and support programs for people with the disease and their caregivers. The Society also funds research into finding a cure for the disease, and into improved methods of caregiving.

For more information, contact your local Alzheimer Society or visit our website at [www.alzheimer.ca](http://www.alzheimer.ca)

Help for Today. Hope for Tomorrow...

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# Alzheimer Society

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## Treatment Options

Recent research has greatly improved our knowledge of Alzheimer's disease. Today there are several treatments for the disease that were not available just a short time ago – treatments which may help to alleviate some of the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease.

The tremendous advances in Alzheimer research have created optimism that more and better treatments are on the horizon. The information provided here is a brief overview of the treatments that are currently available.

*Diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 1998, Pauline embraces abstract watercolour with the bi-weekly art program sponsored by the local Alzheimer Society.*

*Art programs are a complementary therapy that can help people with Alzheimer's disease.*

## Medication

There are several medications available that can help with symptoms such as decline in memory, language, thinking abilities and motor skills. Although there is currently no cure for the disease, those who respond to medication can experience improvements in their quality of life that may last for several years. People respond differently to treatments and not everyone will respond to these medications.

### Cholinesterase Inhibitors

In Alzheimer's disease, nerve cells in the brain become damaged. Cholinesterase inhibitors may help preserve the ability of damaged nerve endings to transmit messages from one nerve cell to another. The following medications are cholinesterase inhibitors:

- Aricept™ (also known as donepezil)
- Exelon™ (also known as rivastigmine)
- Reminyl™ER (also known as extended release galantamine hydrobromide)

These treatments may be considered for individuals whose symptoms are mild to moderate and Aricept has been approved for treatment of mild, moderate and severe Alzheimer's disease. Differences among these medications may cause an individual to respond to one but not another. Depending on the medication, different side-effects may be experienced. These medications may be helpful for two to three years, possibly longer. Eventually nerve endings degenerate to the point that medication is no longer helpful.

## Memantine Hydrochloride

Neurotransmitters send messages across the space between nerve cells. As Alzheimer's disease progresses the neurotransmitter glutamate leaks out of nerve cells and is re-absorbed at levels that are toxic to the cell.

Memantine hydrochloride, known by the trade name Ebixa®, works by blocking the re-absorption of glutamate into nerve cells. It is the first drug therapy approved for individuals whose symptoms are moderate to severe.

Ongoing research suggests that there may be greater benefit to using cholinesterase inhibitors and memantine hydrochloride together. However, more and larger trials are needed to confirm these results.

Medications are also available to help manage symptoms such as sleep disruption. Talk to your doctor to determine whether other medications may be helpful for you or the person you are caring for.

Medications for people diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease are only available by prescription to those under the care of a doctor.

*Note: In provinces where Alzheimer medications are now covered, individuals must meet specific clinical criteria for entitlement. These medications are covered by most private insurance plans.*

## Complementary and Alternative Health Care

Complementary and alternative health care covers a broad range of therapies and healing practices. Acupuncture, chiropractic and naturopathy are some of the most familiar forms.

There is good evidence to indicate that some non-pharmacological therapies (such as music therapy, aromatherapy, pet therapy, and massage) may be beneficial to people with Alzheimer's disease. However, lack of research prevents us from determining the effectiveness of many alternative treatments. The Alzheimer Society is funding projects in these areas in order to identify beneficial therapies for people with the disease.

When considering the use of natural health products, think about the following to minimize your risk:

- Don't assume "natural" means "safe."
- Be wary of unsubstantiated health-related claims.
- Herbal remedies can change the way prescription drugs work. Be aware of interactions with other drugs and tell your doctor and pharmacist about any herbal remedies you may be taking

## Clinical Trials

Medications that are anticipated to actually stop the progression of Alzheimer's disease are currently in clinical trials and some of these trials are well advanced. The most promising of these medications may be approved within the next five to seven years. For additional information on research and clinical trials please see the resource list on the reverse of this brochure.

