

In the Loop

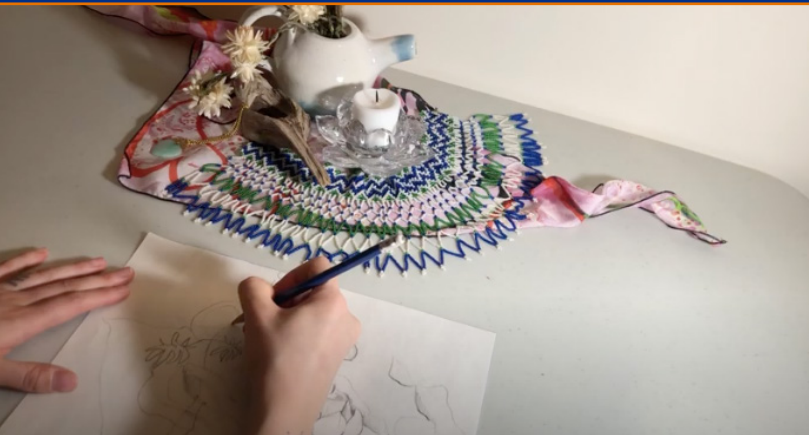
WINTER 2021

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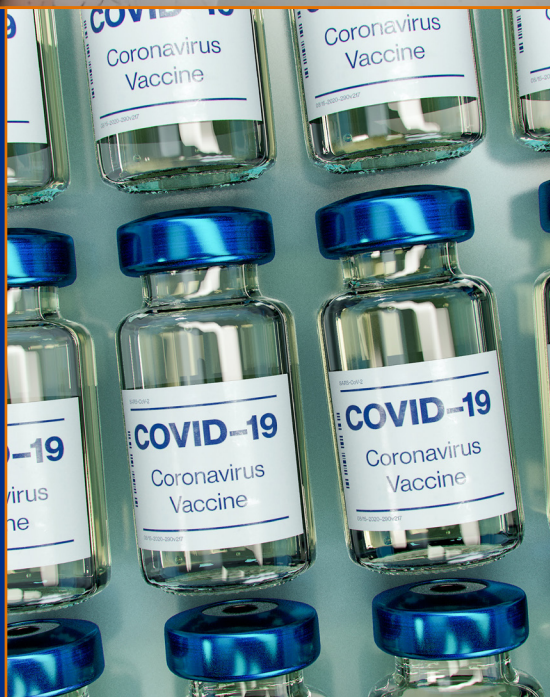
**Reduce your Risk of Vascular Dementia
by Reducing your Risk of Stroke**

Artful Afternoon Now Online



**Reflecting on the Benefits of Connecting
to a Virtual Support Group**

**COVID-19 Vaccines: What you need to
know**



WINTER 2021

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In the Loop Reader Survey

We're reviewing our In the Loop newsletter to ensure we are meeting expectations. Your response to this short survey will help us plan for the future and provide you with timely, relevant information in a format that works for you. Returned surveys will be entered in a draw to win a \$25 Sobeys gift card. You have three options to return this survey:

- Mail it to 112-2719 Gladstone St, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 4W6
- Call us at 902-222-9177 to fill it out over the phone
- Fill it out online at www.bit.ly/ASNSreadersurvey

How do you receive In the Loop? (Check all that apply)

- Mail
- Email
- ASNS website
- Other: _____

How do you read In the Loop? (Check all that apply)

- I skim it
- I read articles of interest
- I read it in its entirety
- Other: _____

What would you like to see in future issues of In the Loop? (Check all that apply)

- Stories about programs and services
- Information about volunteer opportunities
- Stories about families/individuals living with dementia
- Details about upcoming events
- Research opportunities
- Other: _____

Do you have any other feedback about In the Loop? Please provide it below.

To enter the gift card draw, please leave your name and phone number or email address: _____

Thank you for your help!

Artful Afternoon Now Online

Calandra Kandziora, Coordinator, Client Services



Virtual Artful Afternoon is a partnership program between the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia and the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. This program provides meaningful social connection and creative activity to people living with dementia and their care partners. This program is dementia-friendly, fun and interactive. Prior to the

pandemic, the program was held in-person at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. Now, it's held on Zoom to meet the need for social connection during a time when in-person programming isn't possible.

The program is facilitated by our staff and professional artist, Lux Habrich, through the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. At the start of each program session, participants watch a pre-recorded gallery tour featuring selected artwork presented by the artist. Following the video tour, participants are provided space to connect with each other and learn about the artwork in an accepting and relaxed environment. Participants learn about the art process, materials and background of the artist featured during the session. Participants often ask questions about what they have learned and share their reflections on the artwork with one another. There are many smiles exchanged in this program!

"It provided the opportunity to reconnect with the friends and contacts we have developed through this program with the Alzheimer Society and the Art Gallery," says a participant. "In these days of lockdown, we were fortunate to be able to view the Maud Lewis gallery and to hear the knowledgeable commentary by Lux, presented in a very understandable and thoughtful way."

If you have any questions about this program, or to find out about registration, please call us at 1-800-611-6345. Recorded videos by Lux Habrich with step-by-step instructions on how to create two art projects with common household materials are also available online at www.alzheimer.ca/ns/virtualartfulafternoon.

Artwork created by using these instructional videos is welcomed – please feel free to submit your artwork to us by emailing it to alzheimer@asns.ca

Learn to Provide Excellent Care to People Living with Dementia

Kirstie Creighton, Manager, Program Development



We've re-launched our U-First! for Healthcare education workshops. We've adapted these interactive sessions to be delivered via Zoom and will be facilitating them for home support and long-term care staff across the province.

We look forward to working in partnership with the Behavior Resource Consultants to provide education that will support people living with dementia in Nova Scotia.

U-First! is a suite of education programs designed for home support and long-term care staff (U-First! for Healthcare), and caregivers of people living with dementia (U-First! for Care Partners). The goal is to assist participants in their learning to provide excellent care and support for people on the dementia journey.

The sessions are designed to improve collaboration with the care team through the development of common knowledge, language and approaches to care. Through the U-First! for Healthcare sessions, staff develop a consistent set of values for communicating across healthcare supports and systems. These sessions promote the creation of common, respectful and comprehensive approaches to enhance the care of people living with dementia.

"I now understand the importance of learning about who the person was before being affected by dementia," says a past participant. "This makes it easier to support their daily living."

Home support and long-term care staff learn to understand the many possible reasons behind behaviours. They learn to flag behaviour changes that need to be addressed, interact with new skills and common understandings, reflect and report on strategies for person centered care and to work closely as a team to support care partners and persons living with dementia.

"Every behaviour has a reason behind it," says another past participant. "Our job, as healthcare workers, is to use these U-First! tools to understand behaviours and support residents the best way we can."

Participants complete the sessions with a deeper understanding about how to best care for people living with dementia.

"I gained wonderful insight into how residents living with dementia see the world and their surroundings," says a third past participant.

We are delivering online U-First! for Healthcare sessions across the province. If you are home support or long-term care staff, or you know someone who is, please call Heather Murdock at 902-422-7961 ext. 243 for more information. Stay tuned for the U-First! for Care Partners sessions coming soon. If you are interested in hearing more about these sessions, please call us at 1-800-611-6345 and ask to speak to one of our InfoLine staff.

Reduce your Risk of Vascular Dementia by Reducing your Risk of Stroke

Claire Jimmison, Coordinator, Education & Outreach, Annapolis Valley



Vascular dementia is the second most common type of dementia after Alzheimer's disease. Stroke is now understood to be a common cause of vascular dementia. Strokes can happen as a result of narrowing and blockage of the small blood vessels inside the brain; a single stroke, where the blood supply to part of the brain is suddenly cut off or by a series of "mini strokes"

(also called transient ischemic attacks, or TIAs). TIAs are caused by a small clot that briefly blocks an artery. TIA symptoms commonly last less than an hour and may only last a few minutes. TIAs are a warning that a more serious stroke may occur soon. Anyone who experiences a TIA should seek medical help immediately.

How can you lower your risk of stroke?

High blood pressure (or hypertension) is the single most important risk factor for stroke and vascular dementia. High blood pressure can be reduced significantly by lifestyle choices. It can be managed through physical activity, eating well and by taking the right medication. Medications may also help control other risk factors such as diabetes, high cholesterol and heart disease.

How is vascular dementia diagnosed?

There is no one specific test that can diagnose vascular dementia. If vascular dementia is suspected, a number of physical and cognitive tests will most likely be performed. The combination of these test results, along with a detailed medical history, provides doctors with the evidence needed to make a diagnosis.

How can I maintain my quality of life while living with vascular dementia?

Eating a healthy diet, being physically active and challenging your brain regularly has been shown to be beneficial. Staying connected with friends and family is so important, though we recognize participating in social activities is currently a big challenge for everyone during the pandemic. Check out page 12 for tips on staying

connected during COVID-19. Even small lifestyle changes can help maintain quality of life and may even slow down the progression of vascular dementia.

We can help provide you with further resources, or someone to talk to. Our InfoLine staff are happy to talk any time and can be reached at 1-800-611-6345.

This article is adapted from: "Vascular Dementia" by the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

For more information on heart disease and stroke, contact the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada: www.heartandstroke.ca.

Alzheimer InfoLine | 1-800-611-6345



We're here to help

The Alzheimer InfoLine is a confidential phone service provided by our team of knowledgeable and caring staff.

We provide information, support, and referral for persons with dementia, families, caregivers, and professionals.

COVID-19 Vaccines: What you need to know

Linda Bird, Director, Programs & Services



Stock photo. Does not depict an actual COVID-19 vaccine vial.

Our InfoLine staff are hearing many questions about the COVID-19 vaccine. While vaccines are not our primary area of focus, we think it's important to keep informed. The good news is, Canada has now approved two COVID-19 vaccines - Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna - and more vaccines are likely to be coming in the near future. There is a lot of information about the vaccines and it is hard to keep the ever-evolving information straight. Here is what the Mayo Clinic says about COVID-19 and vaccination:

“Getting a COVID-19 vaccine can help protect you by creating an antibody response in your body without your having to become sick with COVID-19.

A COVID-19 vaccine might prevent you from getting COVID-19. Or, if you get COVID-19, the vaccine might keep you from becoming seriously ill or from developing serious complications.

Getting vaccinated also might help protect people around you from COVID-19, particularly people at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.”

We have asked Dr. Melissa Andrew to help us answer questions about older adults and the COVID-19 vaccines. Dr. Andrew has a unique interest on this topic. In addition to being a skilled geriatrician and researcher, she has a master's degree in public health and expertise in research on vaccination effectiveness. She's also part of the Canadian Centre for Vaccinology and COVID-19 research teams at Dalhousie University, and we are proud to have her as a board member.

This is what we know to date based on studies published in well-respected journals of medicine (see references below):

- The vaccines are very effective against COVID-19, including participants in the senior group (above age 65), who volunteered in the studies, preventing over 90% of COVID-19 illnesses. Getting a vaccine will be a strong protective factor against getting COVID-19.
- Although these vaccines tend to cause some mild reactions, like sore arm and

fatigue, in a lot of people who receive them, in general older adults experience less of these side effects than younger people. This is reassuring if you were worried that getting the vaccine would come with a lot of side effects.

- The research trials highlight the importance of getting two dosages of the vaccine, three or four weeks apart, to provide the optimum protection. The immune response takes two weeks to develop after each dose is given and is strongest after the second dose. So, it is important that an individual receives both dosages as recommended by the public health vaccination program.
- Once vaccinated, we still need to take precautions. Hand washing, wearing masks in public, monitoring for symptoms and staying home if we are sick, and being tested if we have signs of COVID-19.

Vaccinations have begun to roll out in Nova Scotia with the plan for everyone to have access to a safe, effective and free COVID-19 vaccine in 2021. Priority is being given to front-line health workers, residents and staff of nursing homes, assisted living and other long-term care settings and registered caregivers for people in long-term care facilities.

To find out more about COVID-19 Vaccination, visit www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/vaccines.

For more in-depth information visit: www.nejm.org/doi/10.1056/NEJMdo005933/full and www.nejm.org/doi/10.1056/NEJMdo005943/full.

Family Caregiver Education Series



Do you have a friend or family member newly diagnosed with dementia?

Our Family Caregiver Education Series has moved online and spaces are available in March.

For more information, visit www.alzheimer.ca/ns/fces or call Heather at 902-422-7961 ext. 243.

Reflecting on the Benefits of Connecting to a Virtual Support Group

Beth Bennett, Coordinator, Education & Outreach, Antigonish, Guysborough & Pictou County

Wendy has been a full-time caregiver for her husband since early 2019 when he was diagnosed with Lewy body dementia. Prior to that, she and her husband saw many changes in him, and it really has been quite a journey with many chapters.

Recently, Wendy joined one of our virtual caregiver support groups.



Wendy

“Finally having somewhere to share thoughts and fears and opening up with people who speak the same language and understand,” says Wendy reflecting on the benefits of the support group. “There are so many specialists, technicians, doctors - all speaking in terms I had to learn. They were, and all are, wonderful, but when you leave the security of their office you are left without a safe avenue to turn.”

The virtual support groups provide an outlet for caregivers to connect, share and listen.

“We don’t always want to burden friends and in our case, without family, we could so easily have become an island,” says Wendy. “The caregiver group is like a lifeline. If I feel like sharing, great. And if not, there are no judgments. It is also a good fact-finding source and a place to share ideas and concerns.”

The group that Wendy meets with is one of eight virtual caregiver support groups across the province. The groups meet once a month on Zoom, a secure online platform.

“The technology is great! It is easy to adapt to,” says Wendy. “I worry about those without technology and would wish that families or friends could set them up for an hour with their devices so that they too might benefit from a caregiver support group.”

When asked what she would say to someone who is thinking of connecting to a

caregiver support group, Wendy had this to say:

“It may not be for everyone, but the benefits certainly outweigh any negatives! I would suggest giving it a try and in no time, once they are comfortable it will become something to look forward to. Because we share something in common, we feel accepted and safe. We are secure in the knowledge that any information shared is confidential. We are not alone! We are gently led through each meeting with care.”

If you or someone you know is a caregiver looking for a way to connect with others, please call us at 1-800-611-6345 to find out more about our virtual caregiver support groups.

JOIN US ON THURSDAYS FOR ONLINE EDUCATION!

ALZEducate



- Various topics & presenters
- Information and conversations about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias
- Open to anyone at no cost, just register online!

Sessions are held via ZOOM every second Thursday from 1:30-2:30 p.m.

For more information visit alzheimer.ca/ns

Staying Connected

Catherine Shepherd, Coordinator, Education & Outreach, Cape Breton

Originally published in the Cape Breton Post

Dementia is life changing both for those living with the disease and their caregivers, and so we hope that by talking about dementia we can support those on the journey, reducing the stigma, and helping everyone live well.

If you've met one person with dementia, you've met one person with dementia. In our experience, everyone's journey is different. Facing challenges is going to be part of this disease. But, at the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia, we want you to know that we see people with dementia living well every day.

How can someone live well? We have a few recommendations that you should speak with your healthcare provider about. Lifestyle choices such as healthy eating, physical and mental activity, staying connected in social activities, looking after your general health, stress management and taking measures to improve your safety can all improve quality of life.

You might be thinking that one of those things has been very hard to do this year: staying connected in social activities. And it's true, we've all had to give up some of our regular social connections in favour of safety during the pandemic. Most of us have adapted to making those connections in new ways, and people living with dementia have done that too.

Before the pandemic, we facilitated a social group for people living with early-stage dementia called Coffee and Conversation, with groups meeting across the province. The groups got together monthly for just that – coffee and conversation. When our regular in-person programming had to be moved online, this one was no different. In some areas of the province, they have continued to meet using an online platform called Zoom.

“Doing it on Zoom, we could chat the same way that we did in person, and the friendships and things that developed were awesome,” says Faye Forbes, a member of the social group. “The conversations were exactly the same as they would have been in person. We did some sharing, we did some supporting, we had some laughs. Everyone really got a lot out of it. We met some new people and reacquainted ourselves with some old friends.”

Here's a group of people living with dementia who got together, chatted, supported each other and laughed. Even during a pandemic!

As I am sure we have all learned this year, a video call doesn't fully replace in-person meetings, a chat over a cup of coffee, or a hug. Despite that, there is no denying that seeing a smiling face on your screen can help you feel connected. Are you looking for a way to stay connected? Try creating a Facebook or Zoom video chat with family and friends, take part in a local outdoor or online activity, watch one of our education sessions, join our virtual support groups or call our InfoLine at 1-800-611-6345.

Research Corner

Sacha Nadeau, First Link® Outreach Coordinator & Research Liaison

There’s always something to learn when it comes to dementia. We learn from people who are living with it and through our ongoing commitment to research. Research helps inform the strategies and resources we share every day. Despite many advances, there is still much to discover about the prevention and treatment of dementia, as well as the best ways to support quality of life.

Locally, Nova Scotia boasts a wide variety of skilled academic and clinical dementia researchers. They explore topics ranging from diagnostic imaging to nursing home design. It is fascinating to see the scope of their questions and to help facilitate the discovery of new knowledge by writing letters of support, advising on projects, and helping recruit participants.

Below is a list of projects that are currently seeking research participants. Note that all projects have been approved by our knowledgeable Research Advisory Board who ensure they are appropriate and meet ethical standards.

Project Title	Lead researcher
“Evidence to Assess the Impact of COVID-19 on Community-Based Dementia Care in Nova Scotia”	Dr. Katie Aubrecht
“From the inside out: The integration, optimization, and promotion of inclusive approaches to supporting LGBTQI2S PLWD and their unpaid primary carers”	Dr. Samir Sinha
Dementia Journey Survey – A survey to help to understand the experiences of culturally diverse seniors and their caregivers when they visit their family doctors for their dementia-related needs.	Drs. Saskia Sivananthan & Sid Feldman
“Community Based Navigation Programs in Canada”	Drs. Robyn Urquhart & Grace Warner

To learn how to participate, visit www.alzheimer.ca/researchopportunities or contact Sacha at sacha.nadeau@asns.ca or 902-229-5954.

Not About Us Without Us

Throughout the research field, there is a growing movement to develop research in ways that include the voices of those affected by the results, not just as **participants**, but as **team members** shaping the direction of the project. We are now helping local researchers integrate this valuable lived experience on their research teams.

Are you a person living with dementia or a caregiver interested in finding out about research projects that are seeking your advisory input? We invite you to get in touch!

Dear reader,

When my grandma was diagnosed with dementia, it was a shock to my family. I saw firsthand the stress on my grandfather, mother, aunts and uncles. Too many families have this experience. My own family's experience on the dementia journey could have been better with supports and programs like those offered by the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia.



The impact dementia had on my family led me to become a donor and supporter of the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia. I am sharing my story because I hope you will join me and make a donation to support people with dementia and their families.

My Reason to Care is knowing that by supporting the Alzheimer Society, families in our province will receive education and support, attend programs and get information that my family could not.

It is comforting to me that people can attend a Public Education session (offered virtually during the pandemic!) where families can learn how to make the dementia journey a more positive one.

Education Sessions are free to attend because of donors like you. But it does cost the Society \$20 per person to attend.

A monthly gift of \$20 means you could help 12 people attend an education session this year.

Please join me in making a donation today. You can mail back the reply on the next page, call us at 902-422-7961 or make a donation online at www.alzheimer.ca/ns/donate. Together, we can help more families have a better experience on the dementia journey.

What a great gift we can give.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Steeves'.

Ed Steeves
Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia Board Member

Special Reply From:

Name: _____

Full mailing address: _____



NOVA SCOTIA

Yes! I am pleased to become a monthly donor with a monthly gift of:

\$10 \$20 \$50 \$ _____

Please process my: Visa MasterCard Amex

Card #: _____ Expiry: ____ / ____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____

You can stop your monthly gift at anytime by contacting Alzheimer Society Nova Scotia by phone or email.

I am pleased to make a one-time donation with a single gift of:

\$20 \$50 \$100 \$ _____

Please process my: Visa MasterCard Amex

Card #: _____ Expiry: ____ / ____

Phone #: _____ Email: _____

I enclosed a cheque made payable to the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia

Would you like to leave a message for ASNS? _____

May we share your message with others? Yes No

Thank you! Please return to 112-2719 Gladstone St, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 4W6.
You can also make your secure donation at www.alzheimer.ca/ns/donate.

Hope for Tomorrow.

Many donors today are exploring charitable gifts as part of their estate planning efforts. Please let us know if you have considered Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia in your estate plans, or if you would like more information about these options.

I have made a gift in my will

I would like to learn more about making a gift in my will

In the **Loop**
WINTER 2021

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112-2719 Gladstone St, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 4W6
902-422-7961 or 1-800-611-6345 (toll free within NS)

No one should face dementia alone.

*Read how you make that possible in
our latest newsletter.*

