Step 8 Plan for the future

Start planning now for the future:

• If you are working, it may be important to prepare for your future retirement. Also, if you are employed, you may want to discuss disability accommodation with your employer.

• If you own a business, you will need to make plans for when you can no longer do things on your own.

• If you have been putting off decisions about your personal life, make them now.

• Make sure your paperwork and important documents are in order, including legal and estate planning.

• Ensure that you have chosen someone to make financial and healthcare decisions for you when you are unable to do so. Talk to the person about your wishes and write them down. This will ensure that your requests are followed when you are unable to communicate them yourself.

• Talk to staff at your local Alzheimer Society for any relevant workshops or supports they might have on advance care planning, finances, work or other related topics.

Step 9 Consider getting involved in advocacy and/or research

The Alzheimer Society Advisory Group of People with Lived Experience helps direct our national strategies and policies. Visit alzheimer.ca/AdvisoryGroup for more details. Dementia Alliance International and Dementia Advocacy Canada are run by people living with dementia. These organizations (and more) offer contacts, learnings, connections and meaningful activity.

Research studies can help you access scientists, new drugs, therapies and peer connections. Participating can also help advance dementia research. Find a list of current studies seeking participants at alzheimer.ca/Find-Studies.

Step 10 Take care of yourself

Maintain your mental and physical health, stay active, make healthy food choices and spend time with your family and friends. Enjoy life to the fullest. Take your prescribed medications and attend all medical follow-up appointments. Try to maintain or improve your sleep, and talk with your health workers about that too.
First steps
You have likely been worried and anxious about the changes you are seeing in yourself. Now that you have been diagnosed with dementia, you may be concerned about the future. However, you have already taken an important first step in caring for yourself: getting a diagnosis.

• Providing support by telephone or email, or through a support group.
• Locating services for you in your community.
Reach us at 1-855-705-4636 or info@alzheimer.ca for free support and referrals. Or learn more at alzheimer.ca/FirstLink.

Step 2 Recognize that you are going through a variety of emotions
You may respond to the news of the diagnosis and the changes caused by dementia with a variety of emotions. You might feel angry, embarrassed, frustrated, afraid or sad. These emotions and more are normal and may come and go.
Let those close to you know how you are feeling. Your family and friends may also be experiencing the same types of emotions. Sometimes, people with dementia feel sad or depressed. If your feelings are overwhelming and won’t go away, talk to your doctor.

Step 3 Learn about dementia
Find out what you can about dementia and how it will progress. Learn about tips and strategies that might help you day to day. The Alzheimer Society has many useful resources to help people with dementia, such as our “Shared Experiences” booklet, our website (alzheimer.ca) and support groups.

Step 4 Tell people
If possible, let the people closest to you know that you are living with dementia. Explain what dementia is and how it is affecting you. Sharing this information will help them understand that the difficulties you are experiencing are a result of dementia. Sharing this information will also allow you to tell them how they might be able to support you.
Refer friends and family to your local Alzheimer Society for useful information and resources.

Step 5 Explore treatment options
While there is no cure for dementia, medications may help with managing some of the symptoms. Read about the treatments that are available. Discuss their risks and benefits with your doctor. You may wish to participate in a research study. Your local Alzheimer Society will have information on treatment options and research studies in your area.

Step 6 Focus on what you can do – and on what you enjoy doing
• Adapt your interests and abilities.
• Pursue a hobby you enjoy or listen to your favourite songs.
• Find ways that help you cope with the changes. For example, write down important things in a memory book, smartphone or tablet.

Step 7 Develop a support group
Find people you are comfortable with to share your feelings and emotions. It may be a member of your family, a good friend, another person with dementia, a therapist or an Alzheimer Society support group. No matter who it is, the important thing is to share your experiences and how you are feeling. Some people also find it helpful to write their thoughts, feelings and experiences in a journal.