

## **Will You or Someone You Love Be Part of the 72%?**

**By: Diana Primavesi, Public Education Coordinator**

Of the 747,000 Canadians with Alzheimer's disease, 72% are women.

It's becoming common knowledge that the number of people with Alzheimer's disease is rising rapidly, but why is it affecting so many women? One reason is that the biggest risk factor for developing Alzheimer's disease is age and women generally live longer than men. After age 65, a person's risk of developing Alzheimer's disease or another dementia doubles every five years.

So what can a woman do? Hiding from the facts won't make the problem go away. The good news is that many women take a proactive approach to their health. While we don't yet have a cure for Alzheimer's disease, research is providing us with lots of information about how to reduce our risk and also live well after diagnosis.

### **Learn about the 10 Warning Signs**

Memory loss is the most common early sign of Alzheimer's disease, but it's not the only one. The other nine warning signs include: difficulty performing familiar tasks, problems with language, disorientation in time and space, impaired judgment, problems with abstract thinking, misplacing things, changes in mood and behaviour, personality changes, and loss of initiative. You can learn more about the warning signs at <http://www.alzheimer.ca/en/pklnh/About-dementia/Alzheimer-s-disease/10-warning-signs>

### **Get an Early Diagnosis**

If you are noticing several of the warning signs in yourself or a loved one, talk to your health care professional. They can do tests to rule out other possible problems and help you get a diagnosis. If you do have Alzheimer's disease, getting an early diagnosis will allow you to benefit from medication, attend education and support programs, and talk to your family about planning for the future.

### **Take Care of your Brain**

Whether your 38 or 83, it's never too early or too late to reduce your risk of Alzheimer's disease. Healthy brain strategies include: eating a healthy diet, getting regular physical activity, challenging your brain, maintaining your social connections, monitoring chronic conditions, managing stress, and protecting your head from injury. While you can't control the aging process, these strategies will help you reduce your risk. Learn more at <http://www.alzheimer.ca/en/pklnh/About-dementia/Brain-health>

### **Women as Caregivers**

Alzheimer's disease also has a significant impact on women because women account for 70 percent of family caregivers. In many cases a woman is caring for both a parent with dementia and for children or grandchildren, becoming part of the "sandwich generation." Being a caregiver can have a significant impact on a person's well-being. Caregivers often experience difficulty juggling multiple responsibilities, managing stress, and finding time to address their own health issues. If you are a caregiver, please reach out and contact us. We offer education and support programs to help you understand and cope with your caregiving role. There is no charge for services and you do not need a referral.

# Alzheimer Society

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Faced with the reality of the 72% statistic, it could be easy for a woman to feel discouraged. But there are many positive things you can do for yourself and those you care about.

For more information, visit [www.alzheimer.ca/pklnh/the72percent](http://www.alzheimer.ca/pklnh/the72percent).

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