

## Living With Early Stage Alzheimer's Disease

If you have been diagnosed with early stage Alzheimer's disease, you undoubtedly have many questions and concerns. Learning about available resources may help alleviate some anxiety about the future.

If you have been diagnosed with early stage Alzheimer's disease or dementia, you may be thinking about a number of things. How will this affect your life? Whom should you tell? What steps should you take? What can you do to make the days go as smoothly as possible?

### Here are some things to consider:

- ◆ Talk to your doctor about the diagnosis and what it will mean for you. Ask about treatments and what to expect of them. Ask how the diagnosis will affect your current lifestyle: driving, for example, or working.
- ◆ Think about who should be told about the diagnosis—for example, family members, employers, coworkers or friends.
- ◆ Take a trusted friend or family member with you to medical appointments.
- ◆ Become familiar with local transportation options and make a list of friends and family you may ask for rides when you are no longer able to drive.
- ◆ Use a medical identification bracelet.
- ◆ If you are still working, find out about the employer's sick leave policy and disability benefits. Consider employment options: is it possible to continue in the current job, decrease hours, change responsibilities or take early retirement?
- ◆ Look into government benefits. For example, Social Security Disability, Veterans' Benefits, Medicare and Medicaid and assistance through the State of New Jersey or your county.
- ◆ Consult with an elder law attorney and a financial adviser on current concerns and to plan for future needs. You can locate an elder law attorney through the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, [www.naela.org](http://www.naela.org) (ph# 703-942-5711).
- ◆ Stay active and socially engaged by continuing hobbies and keeping in contact with family and friends.
- ◆ Use notes and a calendar for reminders of appointments and to track medication doses. Pill boxes with alarms may also be helpful.
- ◆ Keep a list of emergency contacts next to your phone as well as programmed in your phone.
- ◆ Keep closet and drawers organized and labeled.
- ◆ Keep an extra set of keys with a trusted neighbor or friend.
- ◆ To follow through on tasks, keep a list of what you have to do and cross off each item as you accomplish it. If it a big task, make a list of small steps to take to accomplish the job.
- ◆ Don't rush yourself. Do one task at a time.
- ◆ It is common for people to have a range of feelings related to living with memory loss. To cope, talk with trusted friends, or consider talking with a clergy person or counselor for support.