



Health Bulletin



Understanding the Stages and Symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease

(NAPSA)—Perhaps Dad has been repeating things over and over. Maybe Mom lost her wallet—again. Or your spouse couldn't find his or her way home from the grocery store. You're probably wondering, is this just a normal part of aging? Or is it something more serious, like Alzheimer's disease?

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a progressive brain disease that gradually destroys a person's memory and ability to learn, reason, make judgments, communicate and carry out daily activities. Taking care of a loved one with AD is not easy.

When you care for someone with AD, you become an integral part of his or her life. You may need to learn new skills to cope with your loved one's needs. You may have to change your daily routine to make time for caregiving. "It is important to recognize that people with AD progress at different rates, and their symptoms and awareness of symptoms may vary," said Daniel Kuhn, MSW, author of *Alzheimer's Early Stages: First Steps for Family, Friends and Caregivers*. "How caregivers perceive their loved ones' symptoms is key to determining the type of care they need to provide."

AD can be generally divided into 3 stages: mild, moderate and severe.

• **Mild AD:** People with mild AD may have memory loss, have trouble naming common items, may ask or say the same thing over and over, may get lost easily and may lose things more often than normal and have some personality changes, wander, often at night, and be worried or depressed.

• **Moderate AD:** People with moderate AD may have poor

The following are helpful tips for AD caregivers:

- An early diagnosis offers a chance to treat symptoms of AD when cognitive ability is at its highest level.
- People with AD may get frustrated when they bathe, dress or eat. During these moments, be calm and assuring, and try not to hurry or show impatience.
- Caregivers should share their feelings with family and friends, and let them know when help is needed. It is important to build a strong support network.
- To learn more about AD and Aricept, visit www.aricept.com.



memory of recent events, may have a hard time dressing appropriately for the weather or a specific occasion, may forget to shave or shower, may argue more often and may believe things are real when they are not.

• **Severe AD:** People with severe AD may have eating problems, such as forgetting to eat or eating too much, may have problems with speech, may not recognize their caregiver or family members, may become unable to control bowels or bladder and may have problems with walking.

Although there is no cure for AD, prescription treatments are available to help treat the symptoms of the disease. One treatment, Aricept® (donepezil HCl tablets), is the first once-daily prescription medication approved to treat the full spectrum of AD, for mild, moderate and severe AD. "Aricept has been proven effective and well tolerated to help treat symptoms of mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease," said Rachelle Doody, M.D., Ph.D., professor of Neurology, Baylor College of Medicine in

Houston. "Aricept can also provide benefit in memory, thinking and activities of daily living in people with severe Alzheimer's disease."

Early diagnosis and prescription treatments, which may help delay the progression of symptoms of AD, offer advantages to those who have the disease and their caregivers. They may provide families with more time to discuss care options, finances and legal decisions while their loved one can still participate in the decision-making process. They also may offer the chance to treat the symptoms of the disease when people with AD still retain much of their memory and thinking abilities.

Caring for someone with AD is difficult, and therefore, it is important for caregivers to make sure they care for themselves and have support. Educating family and friends about the disease and its symptoms can help them understand their loved ones' changing behavior. For more information about caring for someone with AD, visit www.aricept.com.

Aricept is well tolerated but may not be for everyone. People at risk for stomach ulcers or who take certain other medicines should tell their doctors because serious stomach problems, such as bleeding, may get worse. Some people who take Aricept may experience fainting. Some people may have nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, bruising, or not sleep well. Some people may have muscle cramps or loss of appetite or may feel tired. In studies these were usually mild and temporary.

To learn more about Aricept and AD, please call (888) 999-9616 or visit www.aricept.com. Information provided by Eisai Inc. and Pfizer Inc.