

# NOVEMBER

## Understanding the Behaviors Often Associated with Alzheimer's and Dementia

### Part 3 of a 10 Part Series

### Depression and Alzheimer's

Depression is very common among people with Alzheimer's, especially during the early and middle stages. Treatment is available and can make a significant difference in quality of life.

- **Symptoms**
- **Diagnosis**
- **Treatment**



## Symptoms of depression

**Experts estimate that up to 40 percent of people with Alzheimer's disease suffer from significant depression.**

Identifying depression in someone with Alzheimer's can be difficult, since dementia can cause some of the same symptoms. Examples of symptoms common to both depression and dementia include:

- Apathy
- Loss of interest in activities and hobbies
- Social withdrawal
- Isolation
- Trouble concentrating
- Impaired thinking

In addition, the cognitive impairment experienced by people with Alzheimer's often makes it difficult for them to articulate their sadness, hopelessness, guilt and other feelings associated with depression.

Depression in Alzheimer's doesn't always look like depression in people without Alzheimer's. Here are some ways that depression in a person with Alzheimer's may be different:

- May be less severe
- May not last as long and symptoms may come and go
- The person with Alzheimer's may be less likely to talk about or attempt suicide

As a caregiver, if you see signs of depression, discuss them with the primary doctor of the person with dementia. Proper diagnosis and treatment can improve sense of well-being and function.

## Diagnosing depression with Alzheimer's disease

There is no single test or questionnaire to detect depression. Diagnosis requires a thorough evaluation by a medical professional, especially since side effects of medications and some medical conditions can produce similar symptoms.

**An evaluation for depression will include:**

- A review of the person's medical history
- A physical and mental examination
- Interviews with family members who know the person well

Because of the complexities involved in diagnosing depression in someone with Alzheimer's, it may be helpful to consult a geriatric psychiatrist who specializes in recognizing and treating depression in older adults. Ask your doctor for a referral. The National Institute of Mental Health established a formal set of guidelines for diagnosing the depression in people with Alzheimer's. Although the criteria are similar to general diagnostic standards for major depression, they reduce emphasis on verbal expression and include irritability and social isolation.

For a person to be diagnosed with depression in Alzheimer's, he or she must have either depressed mood (sad, hopeless, discouraged or tearful) or decreased pleasure in usual activities, along with two or more of the following symptoms for two weeks or longer:

- Social isolation or withdrawal
- Disruption in appetite that is not related to another medical condition
- Disruption in sleep
- Agitation or slowed behavior
- Irritability
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness, or inappropriate or excessive guilt
- Recurrent thoughts of death, suicide plans or a suicide attempt

#### **Sign up for our weekly e-newsletter**

**Get the support you need through the stages of Alzheimer's. Sign up for e-news and receive helpful caregiving tips, plus info on the latest Alzheimer's research. [Subscribe now.](#)**

### **Treating depression**

Getting appropriate treatment for depression can significantly improve quality of life. The most common treatment for depression in Alzheimer's involves a combination of medicine, counseling, and gradual reconnection to activities and people that bring happiness. Simply telling the person with Alzheimer's to "cheer up," "snap out of it" or "try harder" is seldom helpful. Depressed people with or without Alzheimer's are

rarely able to make themselves better by sheer will, or without lots of support, reassurance and professional help.

### **Map out a plan to approach Alzheimer's**

There are many questions you'll need to answer as you plan for the future. Use [Alzheimer's Navigator](#) - our free online tool - to guide you as you map out your plan.

Learn more: [Alzheimer's Navigator](#)

### **Non-drug approaches**

- Support groups can be very helpful, particularly an early-stage group for people with Alzheimer's who are aware of their diagnosis and prefer to take an active role in seeking help or helping others; counseling is also an option, especially for those who aren't comfortable in groups
- Schedule a predictable daily routine, taking advantage of the person's best time of day to undertake difficult tasks, such as bathing
- Make a list of activities, people or places that the person enjoys and schedule these things more frequently
- Help the person exercise regularly, particularly in the morning
- Acknowledge the person's frustration or sadness, while continuing to express hope that he or she will feel better soon
- Celebrate small successes and occasions
- Find ways that the person can contribute to family life and be sure to recognize his or her contributions
- Provide reassurance that the person is loved, respected and appreciated as part of the family, and not just for what she or he can do now
- Nurture the person with offers of favorite foods or soothing or inspirational activities
- Reassure the person that he or she will not be abandoned

### **Medication to treat depression in Alzheimer's**

There are several types of antidepressants available to treat depression. Antidepressants called Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) are often used for people with Alzheimer's and depression because they have a lower risk than some other antidepressants of causing interactions with other medications. As with any medication, make sure to ask about risks and benefits, as well as what type of monitoring and follow-up will be needed.

- Courtesy of alz.org/care



## Savvy Caregiver Training

A "Savvy Caregiver" is someone who is smart, knowledgeable, clever, capable and also able to stand "at arm's length" from a situation. For dementia caregivers, savvy caregiving means developing a sense of control or mastery while reducing the effects of caregiving stress and increasing one's sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. Savvy Caregiver is not passive learning. It is an interactive training program that will engage the caregiver in participatory experiences and exercises. *(NM Alzheimer's Association.)*

Jill Shannon, Casa Bella Administrator, and Tracy Ayers, Co-Owner of Preferred Assisted Living, will be attending a training this month in order for us to be able to teach "Savvy Caregiver" classes in Dona Ana and surrounding counties for the community, for the families of our residents, as well as training our staff at all locations.

The classes meet once a week for seven consecutive weeks and are free to the public. Dates and times to come!

"Education is Learning What You Didn't Even Know  
You Didn't Know" -Daniel Boorstin

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# Oktoberfest



Our "travels" took us to Germany last month for Oktoberfest. We enjoyed pretzels, "beer," german sausage and sauerkraut!





Our Super Seniors, are a group of seniors who attend various outings throughout the month. Our outings vary from trips to the mall, local museums, zoo, botanical gardens, senior centers and movies just to name a few. Outings are scheduled in advance and based on space availability. If you are interested in your loved one being part of the Super Seniors Group, please contact Tracy at [tayers.apal@gmail.com](mailto:tayers.apal@gmail.com)

Our "Super Senior"  
Group Visited the  
Pumpkin Patch in  
October!





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## Dessert of the Month Club!

Our staff does it again! What beautiful displays and desserts for our residents and their families!

October Dessert of the Month  
Club Celebrated "All Things  
Pumpkin" - we had some fabulous  
desserts and some beautiful  
displays!





The holidays bring about joy for so many, but loneliness and isolation for others. This is why Preferred Assisted Living joins in many community programs to help seniors living alone, without adequate resources, to enjoy the holidays the way so many do. This year we will be participating in Home Instead Senior Care's "Be a Santa to a Senior Program," and Comfort Keeper's "Stop Senior Hunger" program and the City of Albuquerque's "Warm a Senior's Heart" coat drive.

Event information will be in December's newsletter.

If you would like to volunteer this holiday season, please contact us a [tayers.apal@gmail.com](mailto:tayers.apal@gmail.com)

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## **Veteran's Day Celebration**

Join Us For Some Delicious  
Desserts and Honor Our Veterans

Tuesday, November 11th

1:00pm

All Locations



# Thanksgiving Luncheon

You Are Invited to Celebrate Thanksgiving  
With Your Loved One

Friday, November 21st

12:00pm

Please RSVP to the house manager by Friday,  
November 14th



**Care & Compliance**

November Staff Training Topic

Polypharmacy and Implications for Seniors

Topics addressed in this month's training include *Polypharmacy and Implications for Seniors*. Residents within an Assisted Living setting will use several different medications for various medical conditions, complications and diseases. One of the problems that could rise is referred to as "Polypharmacy." Polypharmacy occurs when a resident has a dangerous reaction to negative interactions between two or more medications that have been prescribed to them, often times from multiple physicians. This course will take a closer look at polypharmacy, what causes it, what we can look for to help prevent it and what we can do to limit the negative effects it could have on our residents.

We feel very strongly that your opinion matters and if there is a certain topic you would like to see our staff have additional training on, please feel free to contact Tracy at [tayers.apal@gmail.com](mailto:tayers.apal@gmail.com) and she will be happy to organize this!



Funny Thanksgiving Showdown - Farmer vs.  
Turkey

Laughter  
is the  
BEST  
medicine.

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**Preferred  
Locations**

Specializing in Care for Dementia and Alzheimer's

Casa Bella - 15 Beds - 2919 Spitz St. Las Cruces  
Casa Bella Independent Living - 2 Bedroom Independent Living Apartments - 2915 Spitz - Las Cruces  
Casa del Norte - 8 Beds - 3200 Candlelight Dr., NE Albuquerque

Robin House - 10 Beds - 9909 Robin Ave. NE Albuquerque  
Tender Heart - 14 Beds - 4308 Tulane Dr., NE Albuquerque  
Vista Sandia - 8 Beds - 8604 Camino Osito, NE Albuquerque  
West Ridge Village - 14 Beds - 3130 Vista Grande, NW Albuquerque  
Willow Wood - 8 Beds - 1008 Chiricahua, SE, Albuquerque

To view photos of our homes and read more about us, visit us at:  
[Preferred Assisted Living Website](#)

For Information on Availability or to Schedule a Personal Tour, Contact:

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