

How dementia affects an individual with developmental disability.



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**How Dementia Affects an Individual with
Developmental Disability**

It is increasingly evident that individuals with developmental disability, particularly those with Down syndrome, develop Alzheimer's disease. Understanding how to support that individual is critical. It must be remembered that the changes that occur happen in the brain, and certain abilities are affected. Although there seems to be a

pattern of change, every person experiences these changes in their own way, and at their own pace. It is important to remember that these changes are NOT a sign of failure on the part of the individual, or anyone else who has been instrumental in the level of achievement that has been accomplished. It is part of a disease process, and no one is to blame.

Short-Term Memory Loss

Generally, the first changes happen with short-term memory. Memories from longer ago may be retained, while memories of more recent events may not be remembered. Never ask someone, “Do you remember me?” It may result in confusion or anger.

Difficulty with Speech/Word Formation

As memories continue to be lost, speech

may be affected. Speech, which may have already been compromised, now may lead to someone becoming totally non-verbal. Continue to talk to the person, even if they are not able to verbally respond. To not speak to someone with Alzheimer's disease makes them "invisible". Continue to include that person by using their name, making eye contact, and using gestures and reassuring facial expressions.

Reasoning & Judgement Change

Another change affects reasoning and judgement. Because of these changes, safety may become an issue. An individual may not be capable of making good decisions on their own behalf. The changes that affect reasoning and judgement also affect the interpretation of images. An individual may be looking directly at an object (their lunch) and their brain may not

recognize the image. That person may stare at the object and not make any attempt to eat the lunch set before them. It is helpful to identify the object by name, (sandwich), assist the individual by naming the food items, (chicken sandwich, green beans, potato salad), and assisting them with getting the food to their mouth. That person may need reminders to chew and to swallow.

TOP 10 LIST OF WHAT TO DO:

DO:

- Be patient**
- Make eye-contact**
- Speak clearly**
- Break down tasks**
- Give descriptive, multiple cues**
- Adjust the environment:
(Evaluate lighting, monitor noise level,
adjust temperature)**

- Make statements and avoid asking questions**
- Try to understand the action of someone: (Usually this gets named a “behavior”. It really is communication. Try to listen to what the individual is doing. That may be their new form of communication.)**
- Be kind**
- Continue to enjoy life together!**

DO NOT:

- Please DO NOT EVER argue!!
(There will not be a “winner”, and it may create uncomfortable feelings.)**

Continue to learn as much about dementia as possible. Understanding, support, kindness and time are the best gifts we can give to someone who is experiencing the effects of a changing brain. Those gifts are priceless!

**Organizational Highlight:
Alzheimer's Association**

www.alz.org/nwohio

1.800.272.3900

The Alzheimer's Association, Northwest Ohio Chapter, serves a 24-county area with services, education and support to families, friends, healthcare professionals and individuals diagnosed with some type of dementia, not only a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. The main office is in Toledo, but, other offices are in Findlay and Mansfield. It is known that individuals with Down syndrome are at increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, so it is important to be familiar with organizations in our community that can accompany families, individuals diagnosed and healthcare providers on this journey. Please contact the Alzheimer's

Association. They are someone to stand by you. The following is a list of services provided. For additional information, or for clarification of services, please call the chapter at 1.800.272.3900.

Support

Care Consultations

One-on-one consultations with trained staff for caregivers and family members to provide information, education and support.

24/7 Helpline

1.800.272.3900

Trained professionals are on hand for supportive listening and providing information. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week toll-free.

Caregiver Support Groups

Groups meet at various locations

monthly. Visit the website at alz.org/nw ohio for current meeting times and locations.

AlzConnected (alzconnected.org)

Connect with an online community that offers Alzheimer's support.

Medic Alert + Safe Return

(medicalert.org/safereturn)

A nationwide, community-based safety program designed to help enroll and identify individuals who are experiencing memory loss due to Alzheimer's disease, or another dementia, if they become lost.

Early Stage Programs

Educational, supportive, fun and interactive programs designed for those who are experiencing mild memory loss and their care partners. Check alz.org/nw ohio for

locations and times.

Education

**Family Caregiver Education and
Speaker's Bureau Programs**
Programs on dementia-related topics are offered to family caregivers, community organizations and groups.

Professional Training
Highly-trained and experienced staff members are available for in-service training programs for professional care providers.

Library/Resource Center
The multimedia lending library offers educational materials and support.

Research

TrailMatch

A free service, alz.org/trialmatch, allows people to locate clinical trials based on their criteria and location.



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