



**TYPES OF DEMENTIA**

Dementia is an umbrella term for loss of memory and other cognitive abilities severe enough to interfere with daily life.

- Alzheimer's
- Vascular
- Lewy body
- Frontotemporal
- Other  
*(including Huntington's)*
- Mixed dementia  
*(from more than one cause)*

# ADRD Basics

## What is Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders?

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, which is a collective term used to describe a decline in cognitive abilities including memory loss, changes in mood or personality, changes in decision-making or reasoning, and other symptoms that interfere with daily functioning. Alzheimer's is not a normal part of aging: it is a progressive brain disease, meaning symptoms gradually get worse over time.

There is currently no cure, but there are several treatment options available to help relieve symptoms and slow the progression of the disease.

### Alzheimer's Statistics

Alzheimer's disease is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States, and Florida has the second highest rate of Alzheimer's disease in the nation. There are approximately 580,000 individuals currently living with Alzheimer's in Florida, with this number expected to increase to an estimated 720,000 by 2025.

Older Floridians aged 65+ currently make up 51% of the total population of Florida. This correlates to the high incidence of Alzheimer's in the state, as age is the biggest risk factor for

developing the disease. The prevalence of Alzheimer's is likely to grow as our nation's population continues to age.

**Elder Affairs**  
FLORIDA

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# ADRD COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

## Three Stages of ADRD

Due to the cognitive changes that occur with Alzheimer's disease, a person's ability to communicate will decline throughout the disease process. A person with Alzheimer's may have

trouble finding the right word, repeat themselves, struggle to follow a conversation, or become sensitive to excessive stimulation. To better understand the person living with dementia, there are several strategies specific to each stage of the disease that can help make communication easier:

### Early Stage

- Don't make assumptions about a person's ability to communicate because of an Alzheimer's diagnosis. The disease affects each person differently.
- Speak directly to the person rather than to his or her caregiver or companion.
- Give the person time to respond. Don't interrupt unless help is requested.
- Ask what the person is still comfortable doing and what he or she may need help with.

Source:

[alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/communications](https://alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/communications)

### Middle Stage

- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Maintain eye contact. It shows you care about what he or she is saying.
- Give the person plenty of time to respond so he or she can think about what to say.
- Ask yes or no questions. For example, "Would you like some coffee?" rather than "What would you like to drink?"
- Avoid arguing. If the person says something you don't agree with, let it be.
- Give visual cues. Demonstrate a task to encourage participation.

### Late Stage

- Approach the person from the front and identify yourself.
- Encourage nonverbal communication. If you don't understand what the person is trying to say, ask him or her to point or gesture.
- Use touch, sights, sounds, smells and tastes as a form of communication with the person.
- Treat the person with dignity and respect. Avoid talking down to the person or as if he or she isn't there.
- It's OK if you don't know what to say; your presence is what's important.



**Take it slow**  
**Ask simple questions**  
**Limit reality checks**  
**Keep eye contact**



The TALK tactics provide a simplified guide for best practices when communicating with a person living with dementia. Keep in mind that a person with Alzheimer's may have difficulty with verbal communication, but can often still convey their emotions through nonverbal communication. Pay attention to the person's body language

and facial expressions, which can offer valuable signals about how they are feeling. Similarly, the person with Alzheimer's can often recall how a person made them feel. Approaching conversations with warm, friendly, and relaxed body language can help the person with Alzheimer's feel at ease with you, leading to better communication.

## Online ADRD Resources

- [alz.org/media/Documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf](https://alz.org/media/Documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf)
- [alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/communications](https://alz.org/help-support/caregiving/daily-care/communications)
- [elderaffairs.org/wp-content/uploads/Florida-Profile-2021.pdf](https://elderaffairs.org/wp-content/uploads/Florida-Profile-2021.pdf)