


# A FAITH COMMUNITY TOOLKIT

ALZHEIMER'S AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Vanderbilt Memory  
& Alzheimer's Center

VANDERBILT  UNIVERSITY  
MEDICAL CENTER



## PURPOSE

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia. Dementia is a general term for changes in memory, thinking, and reasoning that get worse over time.

In the United States, African Americans represent one in five of all individuals with Alzheimer's and are two times more likely to develop the disease than White people. In addition to the toll of losing a loved one, Black families also carry one-third of the nation's cost burden for the disease. This cost is not just for healthcare. It also includes lost income, lost assets, and millions of dollars in unpaid care provided by loved ones.

Our team at the Vanderbilt Memory and Alzheimer's Center acknowledges the devastation caused by this disease. It fuels our commitment to better understand these disparities so we may improve equity in Alzheimer's research, diagnosis, and care.

You inspire us to remain faithful in the possibility that as we all learn more, we can do more to reduce suffering, to improve early diagnosis, and to support those members of our community who are already on this journey.

**Dr. Angela Jefferson**

Herbert O. and Vineta Christopher Director in Alzheimer's Disease  
Director, Vanderbilt Memory and Alzheimer's Center  
Director, NIA-funded Vanderbilt Alzheimer's Disease Research Center  
Vice Chair of Scientific Strategy and Innovation, Department of Neurology  
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**01**

**SEEK UNDERSTANDING**

"The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge,  
for the ears of the wise seek it out."

Proverbs 18:15



# WHAT IS ALZHEIMER'S?

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia. Dementia is a general term for changes in memory, thinking, and reasoning that get worse over time. These changes can cause problems with behavior and everyday activities. Alzheimer's is the 6th leading cause of death in the United States and disproportionately affects African American, Latinx, and Asian American individuals. There is no single cause, but risk factors can include older age, genetics, and lifestyle factors. Researchers are discovering new therapies and continuing to learn more about who gets Alzheimer's disease and why. Currently there is no cure, but the good news is there are many ways to reduce your risk at any stage of life.



“

For millions of Americans, the heartbreak of watching a loved one struggle with Alzheimer's disease is a pain they know all too well. Alzheimer's burdens an increasing number of our Nation's elders and their families, and it is essential that we confront the challenge it poses to public health.

”



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2012b, May 15). National plan to address Alzheimer's disease retrieved from the 2012 National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease

# 10 SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- 1 Memory problems that disrupt daily life
- 2 Challenges in solving problems
- 3 Difficulty completing familiar tasks
- 4 Confusion with time and place
- 5 Trouble understanding visual information
- 6 New problems with word finding
- 7 Inability to retrace steps
- 8 Compromised or poor judgement
- 9 Withdrawal from work or social activities
- 10 Changes in mood or personality



# DIAGNOSIS

A series of exams called a "memory loss work-up" can be used to diagnose different forms of dementia. This work-up typically includes:



Medical and family history



Family member input



Cognitive testing



Blood testing



Brain imaging



# PART



02

## STAY DILIGENT

"You were bought at a price.  
Therefore honor God with your bodies."

Corinthians 6:20



# RISK FACTORS

- Being female
- Being Black/African American, Latinx/Hispanic, Native American/American Indian, or Asian American
- Type 2 (adult-onset) diabetes
- Heart disease
- Being overweight in mid-life
- A history of depression
- Cigarette smoking
- Brain diseases, such as Parkinson's or Multiple Sclerosis
- Excessive alcohol use
- A history of head injury



# MYTHS

The most common and most harmful myth is that memory loss is a normal part of aging. There is a lot you can do to keep a healthy brain throughout a long life. Here are a few myths that are not true.



## **Dental work can cause Alzheimer's.**

**Reality:** The mixture of metals used for silver fillings and other dental work is not a major risk factor for Alzheimer's.



## **Aluminum can cause Alzheimer's.**

**Reality:** Studies have not found that drinking from or cooking with aluminum increases risk of Alzheimer's disease.



## **Young people don't need to be concerned about Alzheimer's.**

**Reality:** Reducing your risk for Alzheimer's starts when you are younger. And, you can reduce your risk at any stage of life.



## **Having a family member with Alzheimer's means you will develop it too.**

**Reality:** Family history can increase the risk of developing Alzheimer's. However, only 5% of Alzheimer's cases are linked to genetics.



# PREVENTION

There are many ways to reduce risks for Alzheimer's at any stage of life.

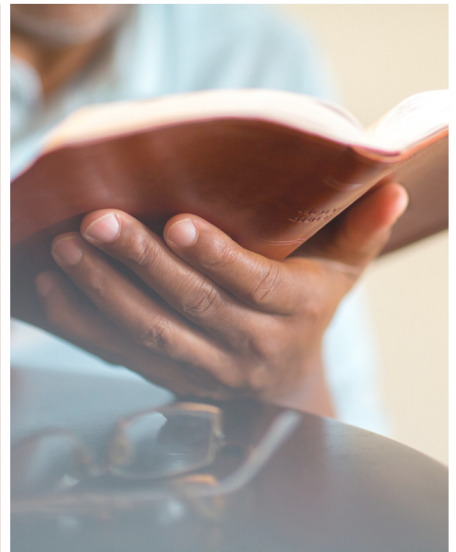


## HONOR THE BODY

Wonderfully made, we are God's temple and our body needs to be a strong dwelling place. Learning how to manage and prevent chronic conditions like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes will significantly reduce your risk for Alzheimer's disease.

## FEED THE SOUL

Faith makes us more resilient. It helps us to cope through periods of elevated stress, which is a known risk factor for Alzheimer's disease. Long-held spiritual values are believed to change the part of the brain that controls our moods, consciousness of self, and sensory perceptions of the world.



## BALANCE YOUR DIET

Evidence suggests that heart-healthy eating may also help protect the brain. Heart-healthy eating includes limiting the intake of sugar and saturated fats and making sure to eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

# PREVENTION

There are many ways to reduce risks for Alzheimer's at any stage of life.



## CHALLENGE YOUR BRAIN

Stimulate your brain. According to the Alzheimer's Association, mental stimulation is important for maintaining brain health. Continuing to learn new skills, working crossword puzzles, or doing math games are great ways to keep your mind active.

## QUALITY SLEEP

A lack of quality sleep affects mood, overall health, and is a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease, particularly for people in mid-life. What exactly is quality sleep? Falling asleep within 30 minutes of getting in bed, typically sleeping through the night, and sleeping the recommended 7-9 hours is defined as quality sleep.



## AVOID ISOLATION

Social isolation is an under-recognized public health problem, particularly for older adults. Isolation and loneliness can cause depression, which is a known risk factor for Alzheimer's. Staying connected to family, friends, church, and community can help us avoid isolation and reduce our risk.



# PREVENTION

There are many ways to reduce risks for Alzheimer's at any stage of life.



## BE ACTIVE

Regular exercise can significantly reduce the risk of developing dementia by about 30%. For Alzheimer's disease specifically, the risk was reduced by 45%. Staying active can also prevent or help manage chronic conditions like obesity, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes, all well known for increasing the risk of dementia.

## WATCH YOUR WEIGHT

There is scientific evidence that obesity, particularly in mid-life, and the resulting insulin resistance can cause changes in the brain that are related to the development of Alzheimer's disease. Taking small steps to increase physical activity and adding more healthy foods to your diet can reduce your risk for Alzheimer's.



## SMOKING AND ALCOHOL

Smoking affects heart health and increases risk of stroke, a risk factor for Alzheimer's. Additionally, excessive alcohol consumption has well-documented negative effects on the brain that can lead to memory loss. Ask your doctor for support to quit smoking and to moderate alcohol use.



## **WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER**

It takes time to process and grieve the foreseeable losses following a diagnosis. However, knowing what to expect and what resources are available can reduce stress for the diagnosed person and their family.

You are not alone. Having a strong spiritual foundation and a loving support system can slow the progression of the disease.

Researchers and advocates are working to increase access to information, health services, emotional support, and research that will one day solve the mysteries of Alzheimer's. We are here to partner with you.

# COMMUNITY RESOURCES

“ Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.

**Kofi Annan**

## Understanding Alzheimer's

Tennessee Department of Health [bit.ly/tnalzpatientcare](http://bit.ly/tnalzpatientcare)

Tennessee Commission on Aging [bit.ly/tnaging](http://bit.ly/tnaging)

Alzheimer's Tennessee [www.alztennessee.org](http://www.alztennessee.org)

Alzheimer's Association Tennessee Chapter [www.alz.org/tn](http://www.alz.org/tn)

Understanding Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia [bit.ly/whatisAD](http://bit.ly/whatisAD)

Living Well with Alzheimer's Disease [bit.ly/tnalzdiagnosis](http://bit.ly/tnalzdiagnosis)

## Support for Those Providing Care

National Family Caregiver Support Program [bit.ly/tncaregiversupport](http://bit.ly/tncaregiversupport)

OPTIONS for Community Living [bit.ly/tnoptions](http://bit.ly/tnoptions)

Adult Day Services [bit.ly/tnadultdayservices](http://bit.ly/tnadultdayservices)

Tennessee Respite Coalition <https://bit.ly/tnrespitcoalition>

Alzheimer's Tennessee Video Caregiver Academy

[www.alztennessee.org/Academy](http://www.alztennessee.org/Academy)

## Home Safety

Home Safety Tips [bit.ly/caregiversafety](http://bit.ly/caregiversafety)

Home Safety Checklist [bit.ly/mysafetychecklist](http://bit.ly/mysafetychecklist)

Falls Prevention [bit.ly/alzpreventfalls](http://bit.ly/alzpreventfalls)

## Driving Evaluations

Ask your doctor for names of driving evaluators or visit:

American Occupational Therapy Association [bit.ly/drivingeval](http://bit.ly/drivingeval)

Driving & Dementia [bit.ly/drivesafe123](http://bit.ly/drivesafe123)



# COMMUNITY RESOURCES

“ Faith is strength when we feel we have none, faith is hope ”  
when all seems lost.

**Catherine Pulsifer**

## **Making Decisions that Focus on What's Most Important**

Get information to help you plan. Review finances, prepare or update your will, living will, health care power of attorney, and financial power of attorney.  
Resources for finding an attorney: 1 (844) HELP4TN

## **The Long View**

Longtermcare.acl.gov <https://acl.gov/ltc>

Long Term Care in Tennessee [bit.ly/ltcChoices](http://bit.ly/ltcChoices)

ALIVE Giving Documents <https://bit.ly/AliveDocuments>

Advance Directives: Honoring Choices Tennessee [bit.ly/tnadvancedirectives](http://bit.ly/tnadvancedirectives)

## **Sometimes Life Requires a Check Up**

Explore getting help to pay for medicines, housing, transportation, and more.  
[www.benefitscheckup.org](http://www.benefitscheckup.org)

## **Caregivers, It Takes a Village**

Being your best for someone else requires taking good care of yourself.

Ask for help when you need it.

Don't be a martyr, involve the whole family.

Join a caregiver support group online or in person.

You will need relief. Call upon family, friends, or church members for breaks.

Use respite care resources in your community.

Spend time with friends.

Try your best to keep up with hobbies and things you enjoy.

Get exercise as often as you can.

More Caregiver Tips: <https://bit.ly/3RX3dOP>

# COMMUNITY RESOURCES

“ Faith and prayer are the vitamins of the soul; man cannot live in health without them. ”

**Mahalia Jackson**

## **Participation Has Benefits**

Ask your doctor about trials or studies.

National Institutes on Health [bit.ly/ADTrials](http://bit.ly/ADTrials)

Vanderbilt Memory & Alzheimer's Center [www.vanderbiltmemory.com](http://www.vanderbiltmemory.com)

Alzheimer's Tennessee Research Connection [bit.ly/joinatrialtn](http://bit.ly/joinatrialtn)

Alzheimer's Association Trial Match <http://alz.org/trialmatch>

## **Keep Moving. Eat Well. Stay Social. Feel Great.**

Getting exercise helps people with Alzheimer's feel better and helps keep their muscles, joints, and heart in good shape. [bit.ly/ADandexercise](http://bit.ly/ADandexercise)

Eat a well-balanced diet that includes fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. [bit.ly/eatwell123](http://bit.ly/eatwell123)

Avoid isolation and continue to enjoy visits with family and friends, hobbies, and outings. [bit.ly/healthycaregiving](http://bit.ly/healthycaregiving)

## **See Your Primary Care Doctor Regularly**

Make regular appointments with your primary care doctor or specialist (neurologist, neuropsychiatrist, geriatric psychiatrist). Ask your primary care doctor for a referral to a specialist.

## **Recommended Reading**

The 36 Hour Day by Nancy L. Mace, MA and Peter Rabins, MD

Alzheimer's Through the Stages: A Caregivers Guide by Mary Moller MSM

**PART**

**03**

**BUILD SOLUTIONS**

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love.  
But the greatest of these is love."

1 Corinthians 13:13



# BUILDING A DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

A dementia-friendly community is one that is taking action to foster quality of life for people living with dementia and their caregivers. These actions include decreasing stigma, increasing opportunities for meaningful social interaction, and offering support in addressing the changing needs of people living with dementia.

- Increase awareness and understanding of dementia and of people living with dementia
- Increase awareness and understanding of brain health and risk reduction
- Collaborate with public, private, non-profit, and health care sectors to better serve people living with dementia and caregivers
- Address the changing needs of people with dementia and caregivers
- Create social and cultural environments inclusive to those with dementia
- Improve the physical environment in public places and systems (e.g., parks, transportation) so that it is dementia friendly



## TIPS FOR DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY SERVICES

People living with Alzheimer's disease, other forms of dementia, or other brain disorders can have unpredictable behaviors. Educate your congregation on their reactions to dementia and their acceptance of those experiencing these conditions. Arming church members with this knowledge can help to dispel myths and remove stigma for families throughout the community.

Stigma and other difficulties can get in the way of caregivers being able to attend services while caring for a loved one. This issue is a major loss particularly for long-term, active church members. Feeling connected and valued enhances quality of life and prevents the person affected with dementia and their caregiver from becoming isolated. Studies show that caregivers are at an elevated risk of developing Alzheimer's themselves. The person living with dementia and the caregiver both need to feel accepted, valued, and welcomed to worship.



# WHAT IS A MEMORY CAFE?

A **Memory Cafe** is a meeting place for individuals living with changes in their thinking or memory, mild cognitive impairment, or dementia due to Alzheimer's disease or a related disorder. It is a place to relax, have fun, and meet others. A diagnosis of dementia is not required to attend. A Memory Cafe provides a welcoming space for caregivers to enjoy a change of scenery and routine. They can meet other caregivers to exchange ideas and learn about resources, while experiencing respite and renewal in their relationship with the person in their life who has dementia. A Memory Cafe is NOT a facilitated support group, a respite program, or a marketing opportunity.



## **A Memory Cafe is:**

- Structured to support and engage individuals with a range of cognitive needs, including those with cognitive changes as well as their family, friends, and other caregivers. It is a time for persons living with dementia and their caregivers to both have relief from the disease and its symptoms.
- Managed by community advocates and volunteers with experience or training in working with individuals with cognitive impairment. Guests who require personal care or assistance to participate must have a caregiver stay with them.
- Free of charge or open to those individuals who cannot afford a fee.
- Physically accessible, respectful and inclusive of different cultures, and freedom from stigma.
- Unique in character, based on the interests and style of the community where it is located and the individuals whom it serves.

# MEMORY CAFE PLANNING WORKSHEET

If your congregation is interested in starting a Memory Cafe, the most important part of this project is providing tables and chairs and a loving, caring space. This list of considerations can help you evaluate time, volunteers, cost, frequency, and your capacity.



## Location

- Does your church have space available?
- What physical spaces are under consideration?
- Is the location easy to find and easy to enter?
- Is there easy parking for caregivers?
- Is the location fully wheelchair accessible?
- Will this space be available on an ongoing basis?

## Audience

- Who are you targeting to attend?
- What is the maximum number of people you can accommodate in a pilot?
- How will you spread the word about the Cafe?
- Will you use the RSVP or drop-in model?
- How will you keep participants and partners informed of cafe dates, weather cancellations, and special events?

## Timing

- Will the Cafe be hosted on special occasions only, weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly?
- What is the best time and day of the week for the Cafe to be available?
- How frequently will you host the Cafe?

# MEMORY CAFE PLANNING WORKSHEET

## Support

Are there other churches or organizations that might partner in hosting the Cafe?

Will you have licensed health care professionals at the Cafe?

How will you recruit volunteers and community advocates experienced in working with individuals who have cognitive impairment?

Are there community groups or church members that are possible volunteers?

How will train volunteers?

Will there be a charity or giving component?

## Programming

Do you have a name for the Cafe that reflects its character, intention, and appeal to the community?

What types of activities are most suitable for the space?

What unique resources in your community can you tap into? (e.g., local music school, center for the arts, nature center, colleges and universities.)

How will you encourage peer connection?

What educational information and resources will be available at the Cafe?

How will you collect and utilize attendee feedback?

## Funding

Consider co-sponsorship or community funding. If you receive donated funds, who will be designated to manage the requirements and budget?

Is there an opportunity for funded or in-kind staffing?

How will you cover activity materials, supplies and refreshments, facilitators, and other costs?

# OTHER WAYS TO PARTNER

If your congregation would like to host an event to support community education on Alzheimer's, we are a resource to support you in that effort.

## Request a Speaker

The Vanderbilt Memory and Alzheimer's Center provides speakers for a short talk at weekly services, monthly club or group meetings, recorded public service announcements, single 30–60 minute presentations, or a scheduled three-part series on:

- Alzheimer's 101
- The Brain+Heart Connection
- Sleep and Nutrition

## Host a Memory Screening

We offer free memory screening events. Attendees receive information on Alzheimer's signs and symptoms, brief cognitive screening, and referral to care as needed. This event requires the use of a room with a door or an area that can be partitioned off to provide privacy during the 10–15 minute screening. For more information or to schedule a screening event contact us at [vmac.research@vumc.org](mailto:vmac.research@vumc.org).

## Honor and Embrace Those Affected

Memory Sunday, the 3rd Sunday in June, is the perfect way to acknowledge individuals diagnosed, providing care, lost to the disease, and who have survived the loss.

## Bringing God's People Back into the Church

Caregivers may give up attending church services due to the difficulty of getting there or fear of embarrassment due to their loved one's behavior. Consider designating one service per month to actively encourage caregivers to attend church with their loved one. Provide transportation or other forms of support to make attending easier. Create a process to help caregivers and loved ones enter and exit church services comfortably. Start a ministry specifically to support families dealing with Alzheimer's disease.

# WHAT IS MEMORY SUNDAY?

**Memory Sunday** is an annual Alzheimer's awareness campaign, observed on the third Sunday in June, to raise awareness on Alzheimer's risk reduction, treatment, research studies, and caregiving through partnerships with local Black churches. The Vanderbilt Memory and Alzheimer's Center joins this observance by acknowledging the loss suffered by families and the larger community due to this disease. We hope to collaborate and form partnerships with you to raise awareness of risks, to encourage preventative action, and to better understand and address Alzheimer's health disparities in the Black community so that our efforts reflect the experience, needs, and concerns of our local community.



For information, resources, speakers,  
or to host an event:

[vmac.research@vumc.org](mailto:vmac.research@vumc.org)

(615) 875-3175



# PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Eliminating stigma and providing support to individuals with dementia starts with committing to the cause. Check all that apply and feel free to add other options.

## Our Church Will:

- Make informational handouts available at church, to our members, and surrounding community
- Periodically place information on risk and prevention on church bulletins and the church website
- Educate members on symptoms and behaviors associated with Alzheimer's to remove stigma
- Annually observe Memory Sunday as a day for Alzheimer's awareness
- Organize a group of churches to host a quarterly or monthly Memory Cafe
- Invite a speaker for a 5-10 minute presentation and informational tabling before and after church services
- Provide members with opportunity to honor those individuals lost to Alzheimer's via bulletin boards, social media, flower honors, or releasing balloons.
- Post a video public service announcement on your website
- Share your perspective and leadership to inform outreach and research
- Provide a platform for community dialogue
- Serve on an Advisory Committee
- \_\_\_\_\_



## RESILIENCE

“ In my deepest, darkest moments, what really got me through was a prayer. Sometimes my prayer was 'Help me.' Sometimes a prayer was 'Thank you.' What I've discovered is that intimate connection and communication with my Creator will always get me through because I know my support, my help, is just a prayer away. ”

Iyanla Vanzant

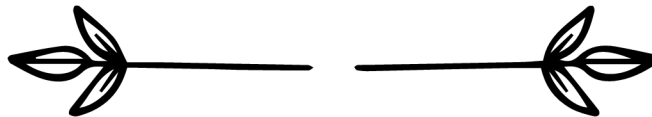
This toolkit is dedicated to the 250,000 Tennesseans currently living with Alzheimer's disease, their families, and the people who care for them.

For more information and ways to partner:

Contact Us!

[vmac.research@vumc.org](mailto:vmac.research@vumc.org)

(615) 875-3175



## Vanderbilt Memory & Alzheimer's Center

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