

CAREGIVER'S GUIDE TO AT FOR ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE



[Alzheimer's disease](#) (AD) is the most common cause of dementia among people aged 65 and older. According to Alzheimer's Disease International, nearly [44 million](#) people worldwide have AD or a related form of dementia. This number is projected to increase steadily as the global population ages.

AD is a progressive, degenerative disorder that attacks the brain's nerve cells. It causes a loss in memory, thinking, and language skills as well as changes in behavior. According to the National Institute on Aging's Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral Center, AD occurs in [three stages](#). These include mild, moderate, and severe. Each stage is characterized by physical and behavioral symptoms that intensify from one stage to the next. So, as a caregiver, you are relied on more heavily as your care recipient (e.g., patient, family member, or friend) progresses through the stages.

A wide selection of assistive technology (AT) products are available to help you and your care recipient. This guide provides you with information about some common

symptoms of AD and an overview of several type of AT products that may help you and your care recipient manage them.

Mild and Moderate Stages of Alzheimer's Disease

Symptoms during the mild and moderate stages of AD are very similar. Symptoms are more severe in the moderate stage than they are in the mild stage. During these stages, your care recipient may:

Experience increased difficulty remembering daily activities.

Your care recipient will find it more and more difficult to remember scheduled appointments and daily activities. You and your care recipient may find it helpful to post up written notes with reminders of daily tasks. You both may find it helpful to use printed calendars to highlight appointments and other important dates. [Scheduling devices](#) to record and manage daily tasks may also be useful. Since your care recipient will likely take several Alzheimer's medications throughout the day, [medication reminders](#) may aid you both. [Lost item location systems](#) may also help your care recipient find misplaced items through the course of a day.

Forget familiar names.

Your care recipient may recognize a person's face but find it difficult to recall the person's name. One possible solution that may help address this issue is to take a photograph of each family member, friend, and colleague and write down his or her name and relation to the care recipient on the back. Another option is a [talking photo album](#). These devices allow you or your care recipient to record the name of people he or she knows in a photo and play the audio when looking at it.

Experience diminishing physical abilities, balance, and strength.

AD affects physical abilities in addition to cognitive functioning. So, over time, you may notice your care recipient exhibiting greater levels of reduced mobility and decreased muscular function. She or he may need a [cane](#), [crutches](#), [walker](#), or a [wheeled mobility device](#) such as a wheelchair or scooter to counter decreases in muscular function. Devices such as [seat lift chairs](#) to help your care recipient more easily sit or raise from a seated position may also be useful.

Experience sundowning and sleep disturbances.

Sundowning is a syndrome that refers to increased agitation and confusion beginning in the late afternoon and progressing into the evening. If your care recipient experiences sundowning, he or she may become increasingly upset, anxious, restless, irritable, confused, disoriented, demanding, and/or suspicious as the end of the day draws near. Your care recipient may experience increased difficulty recognizing what time it is and differentiating between night and day. [Day clocks](#) that display the time, month, day, and date may be helpful. Your care recipient may also have trouble sleeping at night due to sundowning. Some medical professionals use bright light therapy for people with AD to

assist with improving sleep. There are several [bright light therapy devices](#) on the market that may be helpful.

Wander or get lost, especially in unfamiliar places.

With memory loss, increased confusion, and sundowning, your care recipient may experience greater feelings of restlessness. She or he may travel aimlessly, or wander, and become lost. [Wandering devices](#) may be helpful. These devices can help you determine when your care recipient is leaving a set area, where she or he is located, if she or he is in distress or has fallen, etc.

Severe Stage of Alzheimer's Disease

As the disease progresses, the care recipient will require more intensive, around-the-clock care. Symptoms in the mild and moderate stages will worsen. He or she may also:

Become incontinent.

Your care recipient may experience incontinence, or a loss of bladder or bowel control in the severe stage of AD. [Incontinence pants and undergarments](#) can help contain waste (urine and/or feces) so clothes will not become soiled due to an uncontrolled bladder or bowel release. [Incontinence pads](#) can protect beds and furniture from damage or bacteria from the waste. There are also other helpful products to manage toileting, such as [bedside commodes](#) when getting to a traditional toilet is difficult or impossible, [catheters](#) when using a toilet or commode is impossible, or [incontinence sensors](#) to indicate when your care recipient needs tending to as a result of an uncontrolled release.

Become unable to move without assistance.

Your care recipient may not be able to walk or sit up on her or his own and may often be in a bed or a chair for most of the day. This inability to move can cause pressure sores (damaged skin caused by prolonged pressure) and freezing (stiffening/locking) of joints if she or he remains immobile. To meet your care recipient's long-term needs, customized [motorized beds](#) or [geriatric chairs](#) are available to help you raise and move him or her while providing extra support and comfort.

For More Information

[Contact us](#) at AbleData for information on these and other AT products that may help you care for your family member or friend with AD.

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