Resources:

From the Alzheimer Society:

- First Steps For People Recently Diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease
- First Steps For Families of People Recently Diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease
- Caring For Someone with Alzheimer's Disease? Take care of yourself too.
- Heads Up for Healthier Brains
- Healthy Brain Web Section - www.alzheimer.ca

Other Resources:

- Canada's Food Guide for Healthy Eating: www.hc-sc.gc.ca (Food and Nutrition)
- Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living: www.hc-sc.gc.ca (Healthy Living) (See *Physical Activity Guide* and *Guide for Older Adults*)
- By Us for Us Guide© Memory Work Out – a fun and inspirational guide for people with early stage memory loss (Visit www.marep.uwaterloo.ca/products/bufu.html for a free guide)

Find out more - www.alzheimer.ca
or contact your local Alzheimer Society

Alzheimer Society

Alzheimer Society of Canada
20 Eglinton Avenue West, 16th Floor
Toronto, ON M4R 1K8
Tel: 416-488-8772 1-800-616-8816 Fax: 416-322-6656
E-mail: info@alzheimer.ca Website: www.alzheimer.ca
Facebook: facebook.com/AlzheimerSociety
Twitter: twitter.com/AlzSociety

Charitable registration number: 11878 4925 RR0001

© 2011 Alzheimer Society of Canada

B300-17E 2011

Help for today. Hope for tomorrow...®

Heads Up for Healthier Living

For people with Alzheimer's disease and their families

Alzheimer Society

Take Action for Healthier Living

Living with Alzheimer's disease can be challenging. Whether you have the disease or you are caring for someone who does, it is important to take steps to be as healthy as you can be. Research shows that there are many things that you can do to enhance health and quality of life when living with Alzheimer's disease.

Lifestyle choices such as healthy eating, stress management, and physical and mental activity, can improve quality of life, may help to slow the progression of the disease and improve your capacity to cope with the changes that you are experiencing.

Make Healthy Food Choices

While there are no special food requirements for people with Alzheimer's disease, eating a well-balanced, nutritious diet is extremely beneficial. A healthy diet provides the fuel and nutrients that our bodies need to function efficiently, maintain general health and provide energy.

- Eat a wide variety of foods with emphasis on fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Use Canada's Food Guide as your information source for healthy eating unless your doctor has recommended a particular diet for a medical condition such as diabetes.
- Limit salt, alcohol and caffeine.
- Drink plenty of fluids.

Be Active

Physical activity can help you feel better, reduce stress and maintain health. It helps to prevent muscle weakness and health complications associated with inactivity. Physical activity also promotes a normal day-and-night routine and may help to improve mood. The type of activity that works best for you will depend on your fitness level, present activity level and overall health.

- Make some type of physical activity part of your daily routine.
- Choose activities and sports that you enjoy.
- Start where you can and set reasonable goals.
- Choose activity appropriate clothing and footwear for safety and comfort.
- Consult your doctor about the kinds of physical activity that might be right for you or if you have specific health concerns.

Stay Connected

Including meaningful social activities in your day is important for everyone but especially for people with Alzheimer's disease and caregivers. People living with the disease can become isolated and lonely. Finding opportunities to interact with the people around you will help you stay engaged. Talking to someone you trust about your feelings, your hopes and worries or simply sharing a good laugh can provide the support and encouragement you need.

- Call a friend or family member – take someone to lunch or chat on the phone.
- Engage in conversations with acquaintances such as neighbours, store clerks, bank tellers.
- Accept invitations.
- Find an outlet to discuss your feelings and frustrations; consider joining a support group.
- Enjoy yourself – share activities you love with others.

Keep your Brain Active

Mental activity is good for your brain. And activities that use your brain don't have to be difficult or time-consuming. You can incorporate simple exercises into your daily routine. Choosing activities that you love will also help to keep you involved, which is good for your overall well-being.

- Vary your routine – try something new or do a familiar task in a new way such as brushing your hair with your opposite hand.
- Play games such as word puzzles, jigsaws and memory games.
- Read a book and discuss it with a friend.
- Enjoy cultural activities like going to plays, museums, concerts.
- Keep up hobbies or take up a new one.

Take Charge of Your Health

Living with Alzheimer's disease brings many life changes. When we are caught up in our daily lives we don't always look after ourselves. It is important to look after your general health as you face the challenges of Alzheimer's disease. Take charge to ensure that you are as healthy as you can be.

- See your doctor regularly for checkups and to address specific health concerns.
- Numbers count – keep your blood pressure, cholesterol, weight and blood sugar within recommended ranges.
- Have regular vision and hearing tests. Being unable to see or hear properly can contribute to stress and confusion.
- Visit a dentist regularly.
- Get adequate sleep – sleep deprivation can significantly impair your memory, mood and function.
- Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol consumption.

Reduce Stress

Whether you have the disease or care for someone who does, Alzheimer's disease changes your life. You may feel stress over a variety of issues. There are a number of things you can do to manage the stress you face. However, if symptoms of stress persist, see your doctor.

- Empower yourself by learning about the disease.
- Focus on the positive things in your life.
- Be physically active – it is a positive outlet for negative stress energy.
- Seek and accept support from family, friends and others in your situation.
- Prepare ahead to alleviate the stress and anxiety caused by new or unfamiliar situations.
- Use notes, a journal or a calendar to record appointments.
- Practice relaxation, meditation, deep breathing exercises and other stress reduction techniques.

Be Serious about Safety

Taking measures to improve your safety is part of healthy living. This is especially important as we age or experience illness. Many accidents and falls are preventable. A conscious decision to be more aware of safety is the first step in reducing the likelihood of a fall or injury.

- Remove clutter, ensure that there is adequate lighting, especially in hallways and stairways, install handrails and reorganize cupboards to avoid use of stools or step ladders.
- Ask your doctor to review medications that may affect balance.
- Always use a seatbelt in a vehicle.
- Take extra care as a pedestrian.
- Wear protective head gear when engaging in sporting activities that could put your head at risk.
- Do exercises to improve strength, balance and flexibility.

Alzheimer's disease can be challenging, however, research shows that there are real benefits to making lifestyle choices that can help you stay as healthy as you can be. By using the information and ideas in this brochure, you are taking steps to improve your health and quality of life.

Finding Help

The Alzheimer Society is here to provide information and support so that you can continue living your life to its fullest. The Society offers a range of programs and services including:

- Information about the disease, caregiving and coping strategies.
- Support from a counsellor or a support group.
- Information about services in your community that can help with practical assistance such as shopping and preparing meals.

Note: Your abilities, health situation and interests should be taken into consideration when choosing brain healthy activities. If you have questions about your own situation, speak to your doctor or health-care provider.