Alzheimer’s Disease and Latinos

Alzheimer’s disease is the most common type of dementia. Here are some facts about the disease:

- It gets worse over time.
- It is the 6th leading cause of death in the U.S.
- There is currently NO CURE for Alzheimer's. Medications and other treatments may help with symptoms.
- African Americans and Hispanics are more likely than whites to have Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias.
- According to the Alzheimer’s Association 2010 Alzheimer’s Disease Facts and Figures report, Latinos are about one-and-a-half times more likely to develop Alzheimer’s disease than whites.

Dementia is a decline in mental ability that interferes with daily life. People with dementia may have problems with:

- Short-term memory
- Keeping track of a purse or wallet
- Paying bills
- Planning and preparing meals
- Remembering appointments or traveling out of the neighborhood

Why do researchers think Latinos are more likely than whites to develop the disease?

- Latinos face a higher risk of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias because (like the general U.S. population) they are living longer, but they have higher rates of cardiovascular risk factors.
- Risk factors for vascular disease (like diabetes) may also be risk factors for Alzheimer's and stroke-related dementia. Latinos in the United States have higher rates of diabetes, putting them at greater risk for developing Alzheimer's.

Family history and genetics play a role in developing both diabetes and Alzheimer's. So do environmental factors like nutrition and exercise.

Keep a healthy diet and exercise routine to help prevent the onset of diabetes and possibly Alzheimer's.

Talk with your doctor to get advice before you change your diet or exercise routine.

STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE HEALTH BULLETIN

Take Charge of Your Health: Doctor’s Appointments

You have the right to ask questions and the right to understand what the doctor is telling you. Prepare to make the most of your appointments. Plan ahead to take charge of your health!

1. **BEFORE your appointment:**

- Fill out a PDPH Health Information Card and bring it with you to your appointment. On your health information card, fill in the following information:
  - All your medications.
    This includes prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, vitamins and herbal supplements.
  - If you have trouble filling out the PDPH Health Information Card, pack a bag with your medicine bottles and bring it with you to your appointment.
  - Names and phone numbers of doctors and pharmacies you use.

- **Write down a list of questions.** Include these:
  - What is my main problem or condition?
  - What do I need to do about it?
  - Why is it important for me to do this?

- **Write down your symptoms while you have them.** Have you ever felt sick, but by the time you see the doctor you’ve forgotten your symptoms? Those symptoms might help the doctor figure out what’s wrong.

2. **DURING your appointment:**

- Bring your list of questions, your PDPH Health Information Card, medications, and contact information.
- Bring your insurance cards.
- Bring a friend or a family member to listen and help you understand.
- Take notes or have your friend or family take notes.
- Ask questions! Start with the list you wrote.
- Ask the doctor for copies of any test results and helpful information.
- **Ask the doctor to repeat the information.** Ask the doctor to speak more slowly or loudly. Ask the doctor to use pictures or different words. Don’t leave until you understand!
- **Repeat the doctor’s instructions** in your own words. This can help show the doctor if you understand them.

Get your FREE PDPH Health Information Card before your next appointment!

[Download a PDPH Health Information Card by visiting](http://www.phila.gov/health/pdfs/PDPH_Web_HealthInfoCard.pdf) or contact Marialisa Ramirez at (215) 685-6496.

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3. **AFTER your appointment:**

- Follow the instructions given by your doctor.
- Call your doctor’s office if you have any other questions.
- Schedule any follow-up appointments.
- Schedule any special tests required by your doctor.
- Pick up your medications from your pharmacy.

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**PCA Reaches Out to the Faith-Based Community**

Philadelphia seniors come from many faiths and cultures. They often look to their clergy for advice and support.

The Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) Clergy Aging Interfaith Coalition recognizes the role of spirituality in the lives of older adults. The group shares information with seniors through community faith-based leaders.

The Coalition is made up of clergy, lay leaders, seniors, and staff from senior service agencies. Members also include these organizations:

- The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH)
- The Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and disAbility Services (DBHIDS)
- Health and social service organizations
- Neighborhood community groups

Coalition members share information and resources to help them improve services to seniors. They advise PCA on how to best meet the needs of seniors. The group has quarterly meetings and biannual conferences. These events provide opportunities for clergy to network. Presentations have included these topics:

- Coping with Changes of Life
- Strengthening Connections with Neighborhood Resources
- Utilizing Hospice for End of Life Care
- Linking Congregations to Combat Hunger
- Disaster Preparedness
- Reintegrating Ex-Offenders into Your Faith Community

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Sandra Lawrence is the PCA Interfaith Outreach Coordinator. She is available for senior ministry functions, health fairs and community events.

**If you would like to join the Coalition,**

contact Sandy at slawren@pcaphl.org or (215) 765-9000 ext. 5342.
Falls Among Older Adults

Each year, one in every three adults age 65 and older falls. Falls can cause moderate to severe injuries, such as hip fractures and head traumas. Falls can also increase the risk of early death.

How Can Older Adults Prevent Falls?

- **Exercise.** Do exercises that focus on leg strength and balance. Tai Chi programs are a good example.
- **Review your medicine.** Ask your doctor to review your prescription and over-the-counter medicines. Ask which ones may cause dizziness or drowsiness. Advil and Tylenol are examples of over-the-counter medicines.
- **Have your eyes checked.** Visit your eye doctor at least once a year and get your eyeglasses updated.
- **Make your home safe.** Add grab bars inside and outside the tub or shower and next to the toilet. Add stair railings and make sure all areas in your home are well-lit.

Did you know that a disaster could severely affect a person with osteoporosis? Osteoporosis causes bones to become weak and brittle. To learn more about osteoporosis and ways to protect your health, visit: www.phila.gov/health/pdfs/Osteo.pdf

Staying Warm This Winter

As the weather turns cold, the risk of frostbite rises. Don’t stay outside for a long time, and dress warmly.

These tips can help you stay warm outside:

- Wear a hat, hood or scarf. More heat is lost through the head than any other part of the body.
- Wear layers. Layers provide warmth.
- Keep clothing dry. Take off any wet clothing.
- Know frostbite symptoms:
  - White, gray or yellow skin
  - Firm and waxy skin
  - Burning and pain
  - Tingling (like needle-pricks)
  - Loss of feeling
  - Burning and pain

If a person has frostbite,

- Get them into a warm room right away and call 911.
- Put the affected areas in warm, **NOT HOT**, water. Or use your own body heat to warm the area.
- **Don’t** rub the area!
- **Don’t** use a heating pad, heat lamp, or the heat of a stove or radiator for warming.
- **Don’t** give alcohol or caffeine (like coffee and soda). Give them a cup of warm water or broth.

Staying warm inside your house is important too!

If you can’t afford to pay for your electricity bill, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) may be able to help keep you warm! For more information call 1-866-674-6327 or visit www.liheap.org.