

# New Guidelines Anticipated for Alzheimer's Diagnosis

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For the first time in 25 years, medical experts and scientist are proposing major changes in diagnosing Alzheimer's disease. Nearly 4000 experts from around the world recently convened at an international conference on Alzheimer's. The new diagnostic guidelines and recommendations formulated at the conference evolved from continued scientific discovery that has help increase understanding of the disease. The new diagnostic criteria will better reflect the full scope of the disease from its earliest effects to its eventual impact on mental and physical function.

The new diagnostic guidelines would be based on emerging technology like PET brain scans or other biomarkers and would be used to detect the disease even before

memory problems or other symptoms are detected. But would you really want to know?

With these new diagnostic tools, some professionals are predicting a two- to three-fold increase in the number of people diagnosed with the disease. This earlier diagnosis could help with the allocation of funding and monies spent by drug companies to help develop drugs to attack the disease earlier or eventually a drug that could alter the course of the disease.

Coupled with the increase in diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease, is the need for caregivers to know how to respond and adjust to changes as their loved ones decline as well as being able to plan for what's coming next.

The Caring.com website has just unveiled a new online tool to help caregivers accept and prepare to respond to changes and decline of their loved ones.

The website offers tools that help identify the stages of Alzheimer's disease,

describes what's happening medically, and provides tips on managing symptoms. The site also offers advice on how caregivers should care for themselves and build a support network. You can sign up for weekly newsletters and further counsel via e-mail. Support options also change as you update your loved ones condition. Online chat groups are divided by stage, so that caregivers still dealing with mild impairments, can talk with others in their situation, not those whose relatives can no longer speak.

With increased information and earlier diagnosis, care givers and eldercare service providers working together can make elder care responsibilities become more manageable. Unfortunately, the truth remains that earlier diagnosis without earlier interventions that improve outcome, may just be increasing individual and family anxieties for no positive reason.

Only by being educated consumers and remembering our need to care for ourselves as well, will we be best able to continue to be effective caregivers.

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