



POWER OF PLANNING: MEMORY LOSS AND ADVANCE PLANNING

What is dementia? Alzheimer's disease and related dementias cause a decline in memory, thinking and reasoning skills. Nearly 7 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease today.

Dementia is **not a normal part of aging**, but age is the number one risk factor. For some of us, dementia becomes **another stage of life** to navigate and be **proactive** about. Planning ahead is one of the most important steps you can take.

Why does advance planning matter? There may come a time when **legal capacity** is lost – meaning you no longer understand what you're signing and what it means for the future. If that happens, you can't legally make a Power of Attorney or other documents.

Without advance planning, your family, friends, or the State may need to go to court and request **guardianship** in order to help you.

Don't wait! Make your Advance Planning documents as soon as possible.

Types of dementia:

- **Alzheimer's disease** – the most common type; usually starts with memory loss
- **Vascular dementia** – often happens after a stroke or blood vessel problems
- **Lewy Body dementia** – sleep issues, movement changes, and hallucinations
- **Frontotemporal dementia** – changes in personality, behavior, or language
- **Mixed dementia** – when someone has more than one type at the same time

Dementia can affect people under 65 – this is known as young-onset dementia. It may be overlooked or misdiagnosed, so talk to your doctor if you're concerned.

Other possible causes of memory loss or cognitive issues:

- Vitamin deficiencies
- Thyroid issues
- Medication side effects
- Urinary tract infections
- Sleep apnea
- High stress

Get your hearing checked! Hearing loss can reduce brain activity and increase memory problems. Medicaid may help cover hearing aids – call 1-800-843-6154.

Early signs to watch for

Some forgetfulness is normal with age. But talk to your doctor if you experience:

- Asking the same question over and over
- Forgetting recent conversations
- Unusual difficulty with spelling
- Struggling to find words
- Feeling lost in familiar places
- Unexplained agitation or frustration
- Changes in balance or walking

If you need cognitive testing – always ask to be tested in your native language!

Did you know up to **40% of dementia cases can be prevented or delayed**? Yes!

Focus on:

- Healthy blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol
- Healthy diet and exercising
- Managing stress and staying socially connected
- **Talking to your doctor early.** New treatment options are available every day.



Have You Or A Loved One Been Diagnosed With Dementia?

You are not alone. You are more than your diagnosis.

Your values, routines, and relationships still matter – and your choices still count.

Talk about it, there is power in sharing your story.

What can you do?

- Stay physically active – even short walks help
- Do things that bring you joy: music, art, gardening, prayer, dancing
- Stay connected – loneliness increases cognitive decline
- Join a support group where people understand

Your Brain Will Thank You

Visit: www.yourbrainwillthankyou.com for brain health tips and resources.

Learn about **clinical trials** near you: www.alzheimers.gov/clinical-trials/find-clinical-trials Your participation is vital to helping find a cure!

Take the **Power of Planning** into your own hands:

- Make or update your advance planning documents: Powers of Attorney, Will, beneficiaries to accounts & property
- Write down daily routines or care preferences
- Gather important papers in one safe place
- Remind people of what brings you joy

Support & Helplines:

Alzheimer's Association

800-272-3900 (24/7, English and Spanish)
www.alz.org

Alzheimer's Foundation of America

Phone: 866-232-8484

Text: 646-586-5283
(Text service in 90 languages)

www.alzfdn.org

Helpful Websites

Memory Café Directory:

www.memorycafedirectory.com

IL Cognitive Resource Network:

www.ilbrainhealth.org

National Council of Dementia Minds:

www.dementiaminds.org

Dementia Action Alliance: www.daanow.org

Hilarity for Charity: www.wearehfc.org

More Support for Seniors & People with Disabilities:

IL Senior Helpline: 800-252-8966
(English/Spanish)

IL Department on Aging:

www.ilaging.illinois.gov/resources.html

Adult Protective Services - Report Abuse, Neglect, Fraud or Self-Neglect: (866) 800-1409 or 711 TTY Relay

988: Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

211: Community Resources
(Text ZIP code to 898-211)

311: Local government offices

Our society has a fundamental obligation to guarantee justice for all of its members. For over 40 years, **Center for Disability & Elder Law** has been providing free legal services to low-income residents of Cook County, Illinois and expanding access to justice to persons marginalized by poverty, age and/or disability, since it was created by the Chicago Bar Foundation in 1984.