

alzheimer's  association®

combating alzheimer's disease

A public health agenda

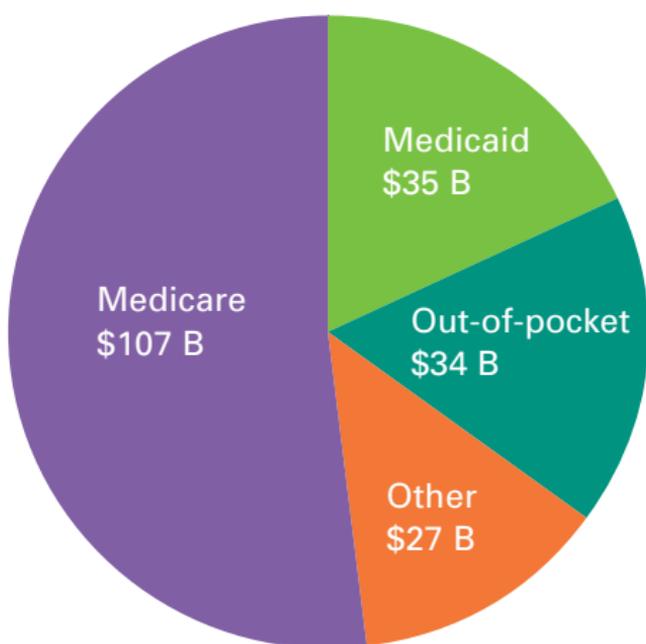


Alzheimer's is a public health crisis.

Alzheimer's disease is the most under-recognized public health crisis of the 21st century. It affects Americans across all walks of life and all regions of the country.

Today, more than 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease. The costs of caring for those with the disease will total an estimated \$203 billion in 2013, including \$142 billion in costs to Medicare and Medicaid.

2013 costs of Alzheimer's = \$203 billion



Source: 2013 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures

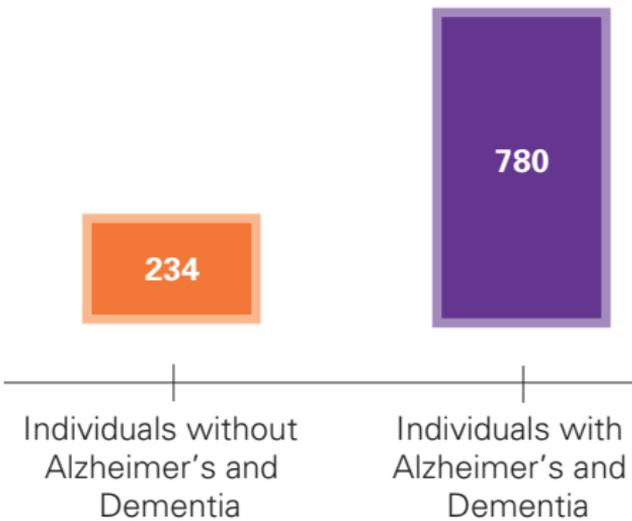
More than 15 million family members and friends provide unpaid care to people with Alzheimer's and other dementias — care valued at more than \$216 billion in 2012. Due to the physical and emotional toll of caregiving, Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers have over \$9 billion in additional health care costs of their own.

Alzheimer's disease can no longer be ignored.

Most people with Alzheimer's have one or more other chronic conditions. Alzheimer's complicates the treatment and management of these other conditions, increasing costs across the health care system.

For example, a senior with diabetes and Alzheimer's costs Medicare 81 percent more than a senior who has diabetes but no Alzheimer's.

Annual hospital stays, per 1,000 seniors



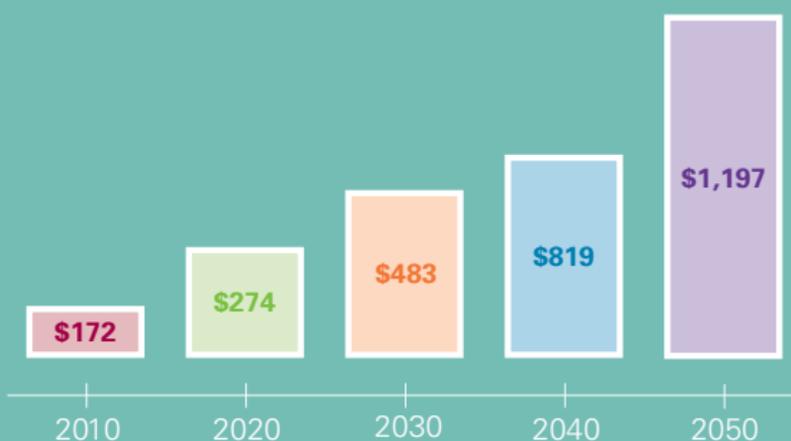
Source: 2013 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures

By complicating the treatment of other conditions, seniors with Alzheimer's have three times as many hospitalizations as seniors without Alzheimer's.

The Alzheimer's crisis demands urgent action.

Unless something is done to combat the Alzheimer's crisis, the future we face is bleak. By 2050, another American will develop Alzheimer's every 33 seconds, and there could be as many as 16 million Americans living with the disease. The costs to American society are projected to total more than \$1 trillion per year by mid-century.

Cost of care for individuals with Alzheimer's
(in billions of 2013 dollars)



Source: *Changing the Trajectory of Alzheimer's Disease*; data updated to reflect 2013 dollars

To achieve meaningful progress against Alzheimer's disease, it must be considered a public health crisis.

The inclusion of Alzheimer's disease in *Healthy People 2020* — the nation's health promotion and prevention blueprint for the next decade — reinforces the need to address Alzheimer's through the use of public health tools and techniques.

action 1 Increase surveillance through the BRFSS.

Obtaining a more definitive picture of Alzheimer's is essential to any successful strategy to combat the disease. Recent work by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention enables states to collect data on the impact of cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease using the existing state Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey.

Two modules are available:

- **The Cognitive Module** — providing data about worsening memory problems and the potential difficulties it may cause.
- **The Caregiver Module** — providing data regarding characteristics of caregivers as well as the problems they face and their greatest care needs.

Including these modules in the state BRFSS will (1) provide the research, caregiving and public health communities with data on cognitive decline and Alzheimer's caregivers; (2) identify opportunities for reducing the burden of this devastating disease; and (3) enable state and federal policymakers to make informed decisions in developing Alzheimer's-related plans and policies.

action 2 Increase early diagnosis of Alzheimer's.

As many as half of people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias have not been diagnosed.

While there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's disease, an early diagnosis is the best way to provide better medical care and outcomes. It offers the best opportunities for early intervention and maintenance of independent living, including support of healthy living that may lessen secondary disorders and enhance quality of life.

An early diagnosis may also increase use of community-based services, delaying and reducing use of more costly health care services as well as the caregiving burden on families.

Actions that must be taken to increase early detection and diagnosis include:

- Increased efforts to educate the public and the medical community about the warning signs of possible dementia and the benefits of early diagnosis.
- Development of best practices aimed at early detection and reducing the burden of co-morbid conditions in individuals with Alzheimer's.
- Education of health care professionals on the importance of discussing memory issues with their patients and on how to assess cognition.

action 3

Promote brain health.

Primary prevention is the ultimate public health imperative. Prevention strategies are key to reducing the occurrence of a number of major diseases and disorders.

Admittedly, more work needs to be done in understanding cognitive health and impairment — and more behavioral and risk reduction research is needed to develop effective strategies to lower the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease.

However, research has emerged showing that healthy living — including regular physical activity and attention to heart health — not only has a positive impact on avoiding a variety of cardiovascular conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease, but may also benefit an individual’s cognitive health.

Actions that must be taken include:

- Integration of brain health messages into other public health campaigns on healthy living practices.
- Increased investment in behavioral and risk reduction research.

An enhanced investment in research and a public health campaign will elevate the prospects of lowering the risk of cognitive impairment and ultimately Alzheimer’s disease.



alz.org/publichealth

The Public Health Alzheimer's Resource Center explains why Alzheimer's is a public health crisis and what you can do. You may also contact Catherine Morrison at cmorrison@alz.org to learn more.



800.272.3900

24/7 Helpline — available all day, every day.



alz.org/care

The Alzheimer's and Dementia Caregiver Center provides a robust offering of information and easy access to online tools such as Alzheimer's Navigator™ and Community Resource Finder.

alzheimer's association®

the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer®

The Alzheimer's Association is the world's leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's®.

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