

## Depression and Alzheimer's Disease

When a person with Alzheimer's disease appears sad and has little interest in doing activities that they usually enjoy, one might think that this is a normal consequence of the disease.

It can be quite challenging to recognize the difference between the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and depression. These symptoms can be quite similar, and it is important to understand that a person can, in fact, experience both. A common concern of caregivers is that the person with dementia may also be suffering from depression.

*Is sadness and apathy a symptom of Alzheimer's disease?*

Apathy, or lack of initiative, can be a result of the damage caused by the disease, to the frontal lobe of the brain.

The progression of Alzheimer's disease can affect the brain to the extent that certain functions or abilities are lost. This often includes the ability to initiate an activity. It is important to note, however, that these sad feelings could also be the result of a depression, and caregivers should understand the difference. If you suspect that the person with dementia may be suffering from depression, a proper assessment is necessary, as depression can be treated. By easing the symptoms of depression, the person with Alzheimer's disease may experience a better quality of life.

Some things to consider when you suspect the presence of depression:

Look for possible reasons, other than the diagnosis of dementia, as to why the person may be feeling depressed. Note sudden changes in behaviour, such as:

- Depressed mood
- Not wanting to do things previously enjoyed
- Communicating feelings of worthlessness and sadness
- Refusal to eat; weight loss
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Sudden decline in memory
- Lower self-esteem
- Diminished ability to concentrate
- Possible suicidal ideas



**ARTICLES MAY BE REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION**

201-222 58 Ave. S.W., Calgary, Alberta T2H 2S3  
(403) 290-0110 or toll free 1-877-569-HELP/4357

[www.AlzheimerCalgary.com](http://www.AlzheimerCalgary.com)

# Alzheimer Society

CALGARY

What can you do?

- Be supportive
- If you think that depression is a problem for the person with dementia, talk to his or her doctor as there are treatments that could help
- Contact the Alzheimer Society of Calgary if you would like more information about this topic.



**ARTICLES MAY BE REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION**

201-222 58 Ave. S.W., Calgary, Alberta T2H 2S3  
(403) 290-0110 or toll free 1-877-569-HELP/4357

[www.AlzheimerCalgary.com](http://www.AlzheimerCalgary.com)