



HOW RELATIONSHIPS CHANGE

Alzheimer's disease does not change the need for love and affection, but it changes many aspects of a relationship.

You may lose the companionship of someone who has been close and important to you. It will be necessary to find different ways to express your feelings.

Alzheimer's disease can also affect the of partners. It can change a person's interest in sex: either increasing or decreasing it. This may create a problem. For example, the person may put demands on her partner for more sex than is wanted.

The physical ability to have sex is also affected. Both men and women can have trouble if the disease has made them unco-ordinated. For a man, the inability to have an erection can be a problem. This can be quite distressing; both partners may need comfort and reassurance.

A person with Alzheimer's disease may be overly affectionate at the wrong time or place. This can be embarrassing. If this happens, explain the disease and its effects to the people involved so that they will understand.

If any problems with your relationship become difficult to handle, discuss them with someone. You could talk with a family member, a friend, the people in a support group, or with a professional. Problems with relationships are common as spouses (or adult children and their parent) take on new roles. Support and understanding from others can make a difference.