

# REMEMBER

## January is Alzheimer Awareness Month



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### Myths are sometimes a long way from reality



*Alzheimer's disease doesn't only affect older people.*

Although Alzheimer's disease affects 500,000 Canadians at the present time, the general population still knows relatively little about this progressive, degenerative illness. January, Alzheimer Awareness Month, is a perfect time to find out more about the way memory loss affects those touched by the disease and their families.

Over the years many myths have evolved about Alzheimer's. Unfortunately, these myths have only added to the stigma attached to the illness and stand in the way of our ability to understand and help its victims.

It is a commonly held belief that Alzheimer's is hereditary, yet while there is a risk factor, only 7 percent of cases are associated with the genes causing the disease. Another myth is that

Alzheimer's only affects older people. Of course, there is a link with ageing, but not every senior develops this illness. Indeed, people have been diagnosed with the so-called "late onset" form of the disease in their forties and fifties.

Contrary to what many people believe, memory loss does not automatically mean that you have Alzheimer's. During the ageing process it is normal to forget things. It is only when this memory loss interferes with daily activities and is coupled with difficulties in decision making and reasoning that it warrants medical attention.

Some people also think that their lives would virtually be over if they were to be diagnosed with Alzheimer's. But many people with the disease live meaningful, active lives. Early diagnosis, medications, a suitable living environment, services, support, and special activities all contribute to improving the quality of life for the victims of Alzheimer's disease.



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