

Putting Alzheimer's in perspective



Understanding the causes and nature of dementia/Alzheimer's is as difficult to untangle as the tangles and clumps of neuronal tissue that give the brain disease its identity. It becomes further upsetting that medical science is not making progress fast enough, and at the same time various alternative treatments have been promoted as to having "some" measured effect in reducing the risk or possible even increasing cognitive skills that have declined.

How does one sort through all this information and decide how to proceed? Here are some things to keep in perspective as you move through the process.

- The National Institute of Health is not endorsing any alternative treatment for Alzheimer's.
- Research funding for dementia/Alzheimer's is less than what is currently spent for cancer and heart disease. Consequently, many studies are composed of small populations and may be of short duration. Both their positive and negative results may not be accurate indicators. Therefore, it will require waiting for the results of long term studies before knowing what really works.
- There are some promising animal studies showing improved cognitive function, but many in the Alzheimer's medical community are looking for greater confirmation from human studies before determining any benefits.
- Testing for results with different populations can be challenging. If you tested healthy adults with no symptoms would results be valid, now that we know that dementia conditions can appear 7-8 years before symptoms? Will what appears to work in a healthy adult work the same for someone who is now at the stage of mild cognitive impairment or late stage symptoms?
- Many of the dietary supplements being promoted under the heading

of “medical food” are not tested by the FDA for safety, effectiveness, purity and product labeling. Any claims related to Alzheimer’s are misleading.

- Use of dietary supplement may be discouraged because of possible bad interactions with a prescribed medications unless under the supervision of a health care professional.
- One of the biggest problems is determining what dosages and in what combination with other alternative supplements will be the most effective.

Many people faced with the thought of aging into dementia/Alzheimer’s may feel they have nothing to lose and will try any new alternative treatment. However, **the best advice is do your research, consult with experts and keep your health care professional advised as to what you are doing. There are no simple answers here other than making your health a top priority in your life.**