

BAI BEACON

*The Newsletter from Family and Community Services
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Medications to treat Alzheimer's disease

The most effective treatment plan for Alzheimer's disease is one that is comprehensive, encompassing diet, activity, non-medication intervention strategies, and medication. Medications used to manage this chronic condition focus on improving cognition (memory and thinking function), mood and behaviors. Each of these areas is important and necessary to treat the person with dementia. By working closely with your health care providers, you can find the best strategies to improve the quality of life of the person with Alzheimer's disease.



Medication for Cognition – One of the components of a comprehensive treatment plan is the use of medication. The medications approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease fall into two categories, *cholinesterase inhibitors* and *N-methyl D-aspartate (NMDA) antagonists*. These drugs work to treat the cognitive symptoms of the disease such as memory loss, confusion, and problems with thinking and reasoning. It is important to know these medications are not curing the Alzheimer's disease, but are working in the brain to help slow the progression of symptoms of the disease.

Our brain cells, or neurons, communicate using neurotransmitters. Neurotransmitters are chemicals that carry messages between cells. Alzheimer's disease causes problems in the communication between cells and can damage the neurons to the point they cannot function well and the cells eventually die. One way Alzheimer's harms the brain is by changing the levels of specific chemicals. Acetylcholine is a chemical that is important for memory, level of alertness, thinking and judgment. Glutamate is also a chemical, and is involved in memory function.

One category of medication to treat Alzheimer's disease, called cholinesterase inhibitors, works in the brain where the cells communicate. These drugs- Aricept (donepezil), Exelon (rivastigmine), and Razadyne (galantamine),

BEACON BITS

Clinical Trials at Banner Alzheimer's Institute and Banner Sun Health Research Institute *This month we will outline what happens during participation in a clinical trial.*

When participants and family members inquire about a clinical trial, they will meet with a member of the research team who will explain the study in detail and answer your questions. The research team will also collect information about the intended research participant. Once the participant and/or family (study partner) agree to participate, you will sign an informed consent form – an agreement that says you understand and agree to participate. The next step involves being screened to make sure that you qualify for a given study. If accepted into the study, an appointment will be made for the first visit.

During the first visit, the team will conduct both physical and/or cognitive tests. After this visit, you will be randomly assigned to a treatment or control group. (Most studies are called "double-blinded, placebo-controlled," meaning that neither the participant nor study team are aware of who gets the experimental medication/treatment and who gets the placebo or control treatment/medication.) You will be instructed by the study team about how to

follow the research procedure. You will also be scheduled for future follow-up visits that will include cognitive and physical evaluations and discussions with the study partner. Participants are instructed to call the study team to report any issues or concerns that arise during the study. You will continue to see your regular primary care physician or specialist(s) for your usual health care throughout the study.

Research teams enjoy meeting new study participants and families and taking time to answer your questions both before and during all study visits!

Did you know that Banner Alzheimer's Foundation secures charitable contributions to support our model of care and research aimed at treating and preventing the disease? To learn more about the ways you can help us win the fight against Alzheimer's, visit www.banneralz.org/waystogive or call 602-747-GIVE (4483).

Our Mission

To end Alzheimer's disease without losing a generation, to set a new standard of care for patients and their families, and to forge a model of collaboration in biomedical research.

act by slowing the action of the enzyme that breaks down acetylcholine. This allows for higher levels of acetylcholine in the brain. This can result in people with Alzheimer's disease maintaining thinking, memory, speaking, activities of daily living, and hopefully slowing the progression of these symptoms. The second class of medication, NMDA antagonists, acts by regulating the activity of the chemical glutamate. This medication is called Namenda (memantine) and can result in improvement in attention, language, and the ability to perform simple tasks (such as grooming and dressing to name a few). Because these drugs work in different target areas, Namenda is frequently used in combination with one of the cholinesterase inhibitors. As the dementia progresses to the moderate and severe stages there is evidence the use of Namenda with Aricept or Exelon has a positive effect on the person's function and activities of daily living or personal care abilities. The table below lists all the currently approved medications for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

MEDICATIONS FOR COGNITION

Medication Name	Dose Range	Medication category	FDA Approved Stage	Common side effects	Tips
Aricept (Donepezil)	5mg daily - 23mg daily	Cholinesterase inhibitor	Alzheimer's disease: Mild, Moderate, & Severe	GI upset, vivid dreams, diarrhea, muscle cramps, anorexia, weight loss, runny nose, slow heart rate	Take in the AM with full breakfast
Exelon patch (Rivastigmine)	4.6mg daily - 13.3mg daily	Cholinesterase inhibitor	Alzheimer's disease: Mild, Moderate, & Severe Parkinson Disease Dementia: Mild, Moderate, & Severe	GI upset, vivid dreams, diarrhea, anorexia, weight loss, runny nose, slow heart rate, rash at patch site	Rotate patch sites daily, Watch for rash
Razadyne (Galantamine)	8mg daily- 24mg daily	Cholinesterase inhibitor	Alzheimer's disease: Mild & Moderate	GI upset, vivid dreams, diarrhea, anorexia, weight loss, slow heart rate	Take twice daily with food
Namenda (Memantine)	5mg-20mg daily immediate release 7mg-28mg daily extended release	NMDA receptor antagonist	Alzheimer's disease: Moderate & Severe	Headache, dizziness, diarrhea, agitation, constipation	Immediate release- take twice daily Extended release- take once daily

Medication for Mood and Behaviors – Many families and caregivers find behavior changes caused by Alzheimer's disease to be more challenging than the cognitive symptoms such as memory loss and confusion. However, there are no medications approved specifically for

behaviors such as irritability, agitation, hallucinations, or anxiety due to Alzheimer's disease. The primary strategy for these types of behaviors is *always non-drug first*, such as modifying communication techniques, avoiding confrontation, preventing fatigue, keeping a routine, providing meaningful activities, and identifying triggers to the behaviors. There are medications that are used in combination with the non-drug steps. The medications to address these behavioral symptoms are commonly used in the mental health area and should be carefully monitored in the person with dementia. The table below contains examples of behaviors and medications. Each person with dementia is different, and has different medical conditions. Your healthcare provider can discuss the best option, if any, with you.

All medications prescribed for the person with dementia should be prescribed carefully to get the desired effect. Because all medications have side effects it is important to know what to look for. Any time a new medication is prescribed, ask your medical provider to explain the benefits of the medication to you. What are the risks of this medication? What are common side effects? Are there other medications besides this? How will you know it is working? How long with this medication be used?

MEDICATIONS FOR MOOD AND BEHAVIOR

Behavior	Medication category	Medication category
Low mood, irritability, anxiety, restlessness	Antidepressants	Citalopram, Fluoxetine, Paroxetine, Sertraline
Insomnia, decreased appetite	Antidepressants	Trazadone, Mirtazapine
Agitation, aggression, hallucinations, delusions	Atypical antipsychotics	Quetiapine, risperidone, olanzapine

Inform all health care providers the person has Alzheimer's disease before any medical procedures or new medications are given. Be aware that many medications you can buy over the counter can cause the person with dementia to become more confused. Be wary of any type of sleeping aid (most contain diphenhydramine, or Benadryl) and are known to cause confusion and agitation. This is also true with medications for dizziness. These also can cause confusion. If you are in doubt, ask the pharmacist for direction.

In summary, while none of the medications used to treat Alzheimer's disease cure the illness, they can have a modest effect on the overall functioning and well-being of the person. When coupled with non-drug strategies, each of the medications is likely to be more effective. It is important to work closely with the health care provider to make certain your person receives optimal treatment for Alzheimer's disease.



Ask The Expert

Michele Grigaitis, DNP, FNP-BC, CNRN
Nurse Practitioner, Stead Family Memory Center

Dear Michele:

My mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease dementia six years ago. She has been taking Aricept and Namenda for several years. She isn't talking very much now and needs help with everything. My friends say I should stop all her medicine because they aren't working anymore. Is it true the medicines only work for two years? I have been on the internet and now I am really confused. When should I stop them?

Regards,
Susan

Dear Susan:

That is an excellent question. There is so much information available today it can be hard to make any decisions! We frequently are asked about stopping Alzheimer's disease medications, and there is no right or wrong answer. Every person and family is different. Alzheimer's disease is a progressive degenerative disease and the symptoms change over time. As these medications work to slow the progression of symptoms it is often hard to determine what the practical effect of the medication is. We wonder what the person would be like if we didn't give the medicine.

As experts in dementia care at BAI, we recommend a meeting with your care provider to discuss the risks and benefits of stopping the medications. There can be several factors involved in this decision, such as family preference (or the person's pre-stated wishes), where the person is living, and financial need. There is some evidence indicating the medications your mother is taking might be helping to maintain some functional activities, such as going to the bathroom with assistance and her ability to walk independently. Often when these medications are stopped you can begin to see a decline in function, or challenging behaviors occur. If that is the case, the decision to restart the medications can be made. Working with your healthcare team can help you with these decisions.

I invite you to join me in learning more about the topic of medications to treat Alzheimer's disease in the April 15 "Dementia Dialogue" webinar/teleconference from 12N - 1 p.m. Registration is required and must be done online at www.bannershri.org under events and education and online education OR you can call 623-832-3248.



Have a Question?

To submit your question for future consideration email us at: bainfo@bannerhealth.com

Clinical Trials Announcement

Studies for Persons with Memory Difficulties

At any given time, Banner Alzheimer's Institute (BAI) and Banner Sun Health Research Institute (BSHRI) are investigating 10 - 20 potential new treatments. These drug studies evaluate new treatments for Alzheimer's disease and Mild Cognitive Impairment. To learn more about any of these new treatments, we invite to call 602-839-6500 or visit www.banneralz.org.

April 2015 Program Schedule

CAREGIVER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

MESA

COMPASS: Directions for Caregivers after the Dementia Diagnosis

Learn the basics of Alzheimer's disease/related dementia and how to implement 8 practical strategies to avoid many of the common problems that arise.

Tuesday, April 21; 10 - 11:30 a.m.
Mesa Library, Red Mountain Branch
635 N. Power Road, Mesa
Free but registration is required.
To register, call (602) 839-6850

GPS Lecture for Caregiving: Staying Me, Maintaining a Sense of Self through Dementia and Parkinson's disease

Caregiving can result in loss of health, relationships and interests. This lecture will provide a variety of ideas and solutions to restore balance while maintaining a self during caregiving.

Friday, May 8; 10:30 a.m. - noon
Arizona Museum of Natural History
53 N. MacDonald, Mesa
Free but registration is required.
To register, call (602) 230-CARE (2273)



PHOENIX

As Dementia Progresses: Next Steps for Caregivers

Learn about the moderate to advanced stages of dementia, how common symptoms can be managed, how to cope with changing function while assisting caregivers to find success in their daily efforts.

Tuesday, April 7; 10:00 a.m. - noon
Banner Alzheimer's Institute
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Free but registration is required.
To register, call 602-839-6850

COMPASS: Directions for Caregivers after the Dementia Diagnosis

Learn the basics of Alzheimer's disease/related dementia and how to implement 8 practical strategies to avoid many of the common problems that arise.

Wednesday, April 8; 10 - 11:30 a.m. and
Tuesday, April 21; 4 - 5:30 p.m.
Banner Alzheimer's Institute
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Free but registration is required.
To register, call 602-839-6850

Planning Ahead Class for Caregivers

Learn how to plan for legal, financial and medical decisions for someone with Alzheimer's disease/related dementia.

Tuesday, April 14; 10:00 a.m. - noon
Banner Alzheimer's Institute
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Free but registration is required.
To register, call 602-839-6850

Brain G.Y.M. (Grow Your Mind)

Thursday, April 16; 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.
Banner Alzheimer's Institute
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Free but registration is required.
To register, call (602) 230-CARE (2273)

Please turn over for more classes →

April 2015 Program Schedule

CAREGIVER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

PHOENIX (CON'T)

Caregiver FOCUS: Healing Breath

We breathe over 20,000 times a day without ever realizing how helpful the breath can be. Learn how healing breath can help you relax and de-stress in your daily role as a caregiver.

Thursday, April 16; 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.

*Banner Alzheimer's Institute
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Free but registration is required.*

To register, call (602) 839-6850

Keeping the Person with Dementia Occupied

Learn how to adapt activities as the disease progresses and find a variety of stimulating and engaging activities that work in order for the person to have fun and feel success.

Tuesday, April 28; 12:30 - 2:30 p.m.

*Banner Alzheimer's Institute
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix
Free but registration is required.*

To register, call (602) 839-6850

SCOTTSDALE

Brain G.Y.M. (Grow Your Mind)

Learn how lifestyle choices can minimize the risk of Alzheimer's disease and then "flex" your cognitive muscles as you determine how to exercise your brain.

Tuesday, April 21; 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

*Via Linda Senior Center
10440 E. Via Linda, Scottsdale
Free but registration is required.*

To register, call (602) 230-CARE (2273)

SUN CITY

GPS Lecture for Caregiving: Finding Activities that Work in Dementia

Find simple, affordable and pleasurable activities both in and out of the home while assisting to create a daily calendar of fun.

Friday, April 10; 10:30 a.m. - noon

*Banner Sun Health Research Institute
10515 W. Santa Fe Drive, Sun City
Free but registration is required.*

To register, call (602) 230-CARE (2273)

Planning Ahead for Caregivers

Learn how to plan for legal, financial and medical decisions for someone with Alzheimer's disease/related dementia.

Monday, April 6; 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

*Banner Sun Health Research Institute
10515 W. Santa Fe Drive, Sun City
Free but registration is required.*

To register, call 623-832-3248

WEBINAR

Dementia Dialogues: Understanding Medications to Treat Alzheimer's disease

Wednesday, April 15; 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. (MST)

Online Education. Registration is required and must be done online at www.bannershri.org under events and education and online education.

To learn about upcoming education and support programs dates at:

- Banner Alzheimer's Institute, visit www.banneralz.org and click on "Events Calendar" icon or call Deidra Colvin, Events Coordinator at 602-839-6850
- Banner Sun Health Research Institute, visit www.bannershri.org and click on "Events and Education" or call Veronica Flores, Events Coordinator at 623-832-3248

These programs are made possible by the generous support of the Banner Alzheimer's Foundation.