

Alzheimer's, Women's Health, and Arkansas's Path Forward:

*An Update on the Arkansas
State Plan*

**Friday, October 9th
Joint House Aging/Senate Children
and Youth**



About the Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association leads the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support.

Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementia[®].



2026 ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE FACTS AND FIGURES



1 in 3 older adults
dies with Alzheimer's
or another dementia

Between 2000 and
2024 deaths from heart
disease have decreased

3.8%



while deaths from
Alzheimer's disease
have increased over

134%



It kills more than
breast cancer and
prostate cancer



COMBINED

OVER
7 MILLION

Americans
are living
with
Alzheimer's



NEARLY

13 MILLION

Americans provide
unpaid care for people
with Alzheimer's or
other dementias



These caregivers
provided more
than 19 billion
hours valued over

\$446 BILLION



In 2026, Alzheimer's
and other dementias
will cost the nation

**\$409
BILLION**

By 2050,
these costs
could rise
to nearly

\$1 TRILLION



The lifetime
risk for
Alzheimer's
at age 45 is

1 in 5

for women

1 in 10

for men

3 out of 4

Americans say
lifestyle behaviors
are important
for brain health,



but only
46%

strongly connect
these behaviors to
reducing dementia risk



Arkansas, By the Numbers

60,400

Arkansans age 65+
with Alzheimer's
(2020)

175,000

Family caregivers
providing unpaid care

268M

Hours of unpaid care
provided each year

\$5.0B

Total value of that
unpaid care

The cost of caring for Arkansans with Alzheimer's and other dementias is projected to grow sharply in the years ahead — and the state's workforce isn't keeping pace. **A 61.7% increase in geriatricians is needed to meet 2050 demand; a 21.5% increase in home health and personal care aides is needed to meet 2032 demand.**

What Alzheimer's Costs Arkansas

\$514M

Medicaid costs of
Alzheimer's care (2025)

21.5%

Dementia hospital
readmission rate (2018)

1,530

ER visits per 1,000
with dementia (2018)

\$30,023

Medicare cost per
person
with dementia (2025 \$)

Behind these costs is unpaid care: **more than 60% of Arkansas dementia caregivers are women**, providing care valued at \$5.0B a year. The State Plan notes that when caregivers lack respite, training, and support, their own health may decline and the person they care for faces greater risk of hospitalization or earlier long-term care placement.

Sources: 2026 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures — Arkansas Fact Sheet; Arkansas Alzheimer's and Dementia State Plan (Oct. 2026), pp. 5, 14; Arkansas Dementia Caregiving Fact Sheet (2023 BRFSS)

Alzheimer's Disease

A Women's Health Issue

In the United States alone, about **13 MILLION WOMEN** are either living with Alzheimer's or caring for someone who has it.

Almost 2/3rds of Americans living with Alzheimer's are women



More than 60% of Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers are women. More specifically, 1/3 of dementia caregivers are DAUGHTERS



Nearly 19% of women Alzheimer's caregivers had **TO QUIT WORK** either to become a caregiver or because their caregiving duties became too burdensome.



Women in their 60's are TWICE AS LIKELY to develop Alzheimer's disease over the rest of their lives as they are to develop breast cancer



Caregivers who are women may experience higher levels of burden, depression and impaired health than men.



Populations at **Higher Risk**



Black Americans are about **twice as likely** as White Americans to have Alzheimer's or another dementia.



Hispanic Americans are **one and a half times** as likely to have the disease as White Americans.



Almost **two-thirds** of Americans living with Alzheimer's are women.

Impact of Alzheimer's on Families



Caring for someone living with Alzheimer's can take a **physical, emotional, social and financial toll** on families.



Approximately two-thirds of caregivers are women; more specifically, **over one-third of dementia caregivers are daughters.**



Of the total lifetime cost of caring for someone with dementia, **70% is borne by families** — either through out-of-pocket health and long-term care expenses or from the value of unpaid care.



Eighty-three percent of the help provided to older adults in the United States comes from family members, friends or other unpaid caregivers. **This care is valued at over \$271 billion.**



Compared with caregivers of people without dementia, **twice as many caregivers of those with dementia indicate substantial emotional, financial and physical difficulties.**

The Dual Toll on Family Caregivers

67% Female Caregivers

Unpaid Family Safety Net

Nearly two-thirds of unpaid dementia caregivers are women—daughters, wives, and mothers managing round-the-clock care.

Unpaid family care is Arkansas's primary long-term care safety net, keeping loved ones out of costly institutional facilities.

Workforce & Career Loss

Direct Labor Impact

Women caregivers frequently reduce working hours, take unpaid leave, turn down promotions, or leave jobs entirely.

This creates an immediate, severe reduction in Arkansas's labor force participation, retirement savings, and household earnings.

Chronic Health Toll

Physical & Mental Burnout

Caregivers experience alarming rates of clinical depression, anxiety, hypertension, and emotional exhaustion.

Secondary health complications among stressed caregivers significantly increase overall state and commercial health expenditures.

Providing caregiver respite support directly preserves family economic stability and keeps Arkansas patients safely in their homes.

What this means for Arkansas women

60,400 Arkansans age 65+ are living with Alzheimer's.

Nationally, almost two-thirds of Americans living with Alzheimer's are women.

**Estimate, not an Arkansas count: 60,400 Arkansans 65+ (2020) × 61%, the national share of women among Americans 65+ with Alzheimer's (4.5M of 7.4M). Sources: Alzheimer's Association; AR Dementia Caregiving Fact Sheet (2023 BRFSS).*



In Arkansas, **60.2%** of dementia caregivers are women.



More than **32%** of Arkansas dementia caregivers are also caring for a child.



An estimated **37,000** Arkansas women age 65+ are living with Alzheimer's.*



Nearly **46%** of Arkansas dementia caregivers report being socially isolated.

Advancements in Alzheimer's Research



Take Charge of Your Brain Health



There are several risk factors for cognitive decline and dementia. Some, such as age, we can't control. But there are **actions we can take to improve our brain health.**

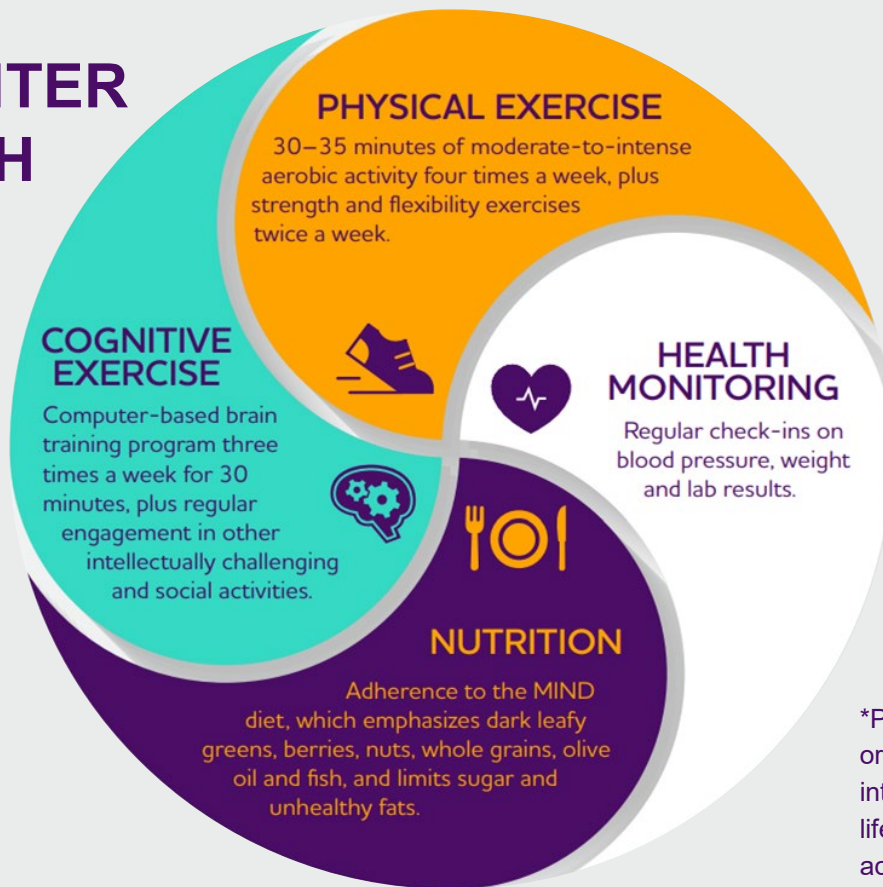


Growing evidence shows that **healthy living can lower the risk of cognitive decline and possibly dementia.**



Our brains need to be taken care of at all ages. It is never **too early or too late** to take action to protect brain health.

THE U.S. POINTER BRAIN HEALTH RECIPE*



*Participants followed either a self-guided or structured lifestyle program. The two interventions both focused on the same lifestyle domains, but differed in structure, accountability and support provided.

Treatments for Alzheimer's

While there's currently no cure for Alzheimer's, there are treatments that can change disease progression, and drug and non-drug options that may help treat symptoms. Talk to your doctor to learn more about treatment options. Learn more at [alz.org/treatments](https://www.alz.org/treatments).



New treatments are available that slow disease progression for those in the earliest stages.



Drug and non-drugs options are available that **may help treat symptoms**, such as memory loss and confusion.



Everyone experiences Alzheimer's differently, treatments **work in varying degrees and are not effective for everyone**.



A Changing Landscape — and a Widening Gap

Research is moving fast.

Modifiable risk factors — blood pressure, diabetes, hearing loss, physical activity — could prevent or delay nearly 45% of dementia cases.

Diagnosis and treatment are changing.

New blood-based biomarker tests and FDA-approved disease-modifying treatments make early detection and specialist access more important than ever.

Rural Arkansas Access Gaps.

Limited access to neurologists, geriatricians, PET imaging, and infusion centers means these advances may not reach the communities that need them most.

The 2022 plan built a foundation — now it's time to build on it.

A permanent Advisory Council, a Dementia Services Coordinator, and a Respite Grant Pilot are in place. Important work remains.

What's New in the Arkansas State Plan

1

WHAT IT IS

Arkansas's Alzheimer's and Dementia State Plan, updated October 2026: a four-year roadmap that builds on the 2022–2026 plan. (Authorized by ACT 391, 2021)

2

WHAT'S NEW – Reflects a Changing Research Landscape

New blood-based biomarker tests and FDA-approved disease-modifying treatments make early detection and specialist access more important than ever.

3

Who Shaped It - Alzheimer's and Dementia Advisory Council

Prepared by the Advisory Council, co-chaired by Sen. Clint Penzo and Rep. Les Warren, with state agencies, UAMS, providers, NGO's, and family caregiver,

4

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Meant to guide legislative action and funding over four years; the Council will keep monitoring and reporting to lawmakers.

Four Priorities for the Next Four Years

1

Advancing Risk Reduction, Brain Health, Early Detection, Diagnosis, and Care Planning

2

Enhancing Family Caregiver Support

3

Ensuring Access to Diagnostics and Treatment

4

Supporting Access and Quality of Care

Why Each Priority Matters for Women

1

RISK REDUCTION, EARLY DETECTION & CARE PLANNING

Most people living with Alzheimer's are women. Timely assessment and a care plan help families navigate next steps.

2

FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT

More than 60% of dementia caregivers are women, and the overwhelming majority of caregivers who need counseling and respite are women.

3

ACCESS TO DIAGNOSTICS & TREATMENT

With women making up most people living with the disease, coverage gaps for approved diagnostics and treatments affect women and their families most.

4

ACCESS & QUALITY OF CARE

Home and community-based services, workforce, and consumer protections support women on both sides of care: as caregivers and as people living with dementia.

2027 Policy Recommendations

Policy Recommendation	Priority Area
Expand Access to Cognitive Assessments	Ensuring Access to Diagnostics and Treatment
Expand Access to Caregiver Respite Support	Enhancing Family Caregiver Support
Strengthen Dementia Training for Healthcare Providers	Supporting Access and Quality of Care
Strengthen Consumer Protections in Home Care	Supporting Access and Quality of Care
Expand Access to FDA-Approved Treatments	Ensuring Access to Diagnostics and Treatment



24/7 Helpline



The Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900) is a free service offering confidential information and support for people living with dementia, caregivers, families and the public.



Free Education and Support

The Association offers robust information, education and support both in person and online, and helps to connect individuals with resources in the community.

TrialMatch®

The Association connects individuals living with cognitive impairment, Alzheimer's disease or another dementia, caregivers and healthy participants with current research studies. This free, easy-to-use service helps you find clinical research that may be a good fit.





Director of Government Affairs and Public
Policy

**Alzheimer's Association – Arkansas
Chapter**

501-253-1931 (mobile)

DMCOOK@ALZ.ORG



Every Arkansan impacted by dementia should be able to age with dignity and receive appropriate care and support — regardless of income, background, or geographic location.

Thank you.

Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Advisory Council · 2026

