

Q: My spouse was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. I have been able to manage OK, but recently his personal hygiene is getting very bad and I am afraid to pursue because he becomes argumentative and difficult. I don't know where to turn or who to contact. Margaret W. -Sarasota

A: One of the first places to contact might be the Alzheimer's Association. Their role is to observe, assess the immediate situation, and address a plan to proceed with. They not only help the AD afflicted individual, but can help the caregiver as well. They might suggest the names of some home health companies to contact that will pick up the bathing/hygiene aspect, take your loved one to a doctors appointments, or just visit and be a companion while you take a break. I would encourage caregivers to join one of the many support groups in Sarasota County and begin to lay out a plan to prepare for future changes. Usually, increasing the in home care in the beginning is the next logical step and perhaps introducing the Sr. Friendship Centers' Living Room Program could assist in some daytime care. Home Safety evaluations as well as the Safe Return/Medic Alert bracelet program needs to be addressed. Sign up for a caregiver training class, which is held at the Senior Friendship Center and at Comfort Keepers, to better understand the disease and its progression. On going support from the Alzheimer's Association for referrals to Assisted Living Facilities or Skilled Care/Memory Care as well as phone support is always available.

PS. If consider joining us at the Alzheimer's Memory Walk on Lido Beach October 24 2009. If you can't make the walk please consider sending a contribution to the local Alzheimer's office on Tuttle Ave.