

**Caring for Your Loved One  
Article #4**

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Dear Geriatric Care Manager,

I am an elderly man who just recently noticed that my wife has been forgetting a lot more than normal. I am not sure this can be contributed to Alzheimer's disease or something as simple as old age. We have been together for 60 years and I love her dearly. I am so scared and worried, and I don't know what to do first.

Signed,

Scared Husband

Dear Scared Husband,

It must be extremely difficult for you to see your beloved wife experiencing memory changes. This can be very stressful for a spouse. There are some actions which you can immediately take, and sometimes making a plan and moving forward with it can decrease some of the feelings of helplessness. First of all, it is extremely important to determine a diagnosis. There are many conditions that can present as cognitive impairment, some of which are reversible, such as infections or reactions to medications. So start with a visit to her primary care physician to rule out some of these disorders. If the diagnosis does end up being Alzheimer's disease, or another type of dementia, learn as much as you can. The Alzheimer's Association has some wonderful tools that can help educate you about the disease and how to be a caregiver for someone with the disease. Think safety first.

A geriatric care manager or occupational therapist can visit your home and make recommendations about simple home improvements and modifications which can decrease fall risk, and improve your wife's ability to function safely at home. Utilize the community resources that are available. The Mercer County Office on Aging and other social service organizations will be able to connect you to the many resources in our area, including informational programs and support groups. These are just a few suggestions that may be helpful. Knowledge and support will go a long way in helping you plan for now and the future. Try to focus on your wife's strengths and not the deficits that you observe, and remember to take care of yourself. Good luck.