[Alzheimer's Disease: How do you know, and how do you cope?](http://www.conversantbio.com/blog/alzheimers-disease-how-do-you-know-and-how-do-you-cope)

*Posted by*[*Luke Doiron*](http://www.conversantbio.com/blog/author/luke-doiron)*on Jul 4, 2015 7:30:00 AM*

We have been receiving feedback from readers stating that they would like to learn more about what patient's lives are like during the diagnosis and treatment phases of the diseases we work with.  Often, clues from treatment procedures will help indicate the availability of biospecimens. Over the next few weeks, look for a series of articles surrounding patient treatment and diagnosis as well as a few patient profiles.

Alzheimer's is a brain disease that causes a slow decline in memory, thinking and reasoning skills. There are ten warning signs from the [Alzheimer’s Association](http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_10_signs_of_alzheimers.asp) that you may possibly be developing Alzheimer’s. Not all individuals will experience all of these signs, and some may experience them at varying degrees.

* Memory loss that disrupts daily life.
* Challenges in planning or solving problems.
* Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work, or at leisure.
* Confusion with time or place.
* Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships.
* New problems with words in speaking or writing.
* Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps.
* Decreased or poor judgement.
* Withdrawal from work or social activities.
* Changes in mood or personality.

If you notice these signs, don’t ignore the possibility. Schedule an appointment with your doctor. If detected early on, you can get the maximum benefit from available treatments, have more time to plan for the future, and get help for yourself and your loved ones.

Once you are diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, your life is in for a change. Small tasks suddenly become more challenging. Your life as you knew it is now an entirely different story. Simple pieces of information are almost impossible to remember, but that doesn’t mean there is no hope. Most people go through a period where they deny that anything is wrong; once they have accepted this challenge, then they can face it head on. Developing coping methods can help to remain engaged, respond to challenges that will help you maximize your independence, and gain a sense of control back over your life. Use these simple steps from the [Alzheimer’s Association](http://www.alz.org/i-have-alz/tips-for-daily-life.asp) for making your own helpful coping method:

* Identify and list what tasks have become more difficult.
* Determine if the task is necessary.
* Find the strategy that works the best for you.

You can also use these helpful tips for planning out daily life.

* Set yourself realistic goals.
* Develop a daily routine.
* Approach one task at a time.
* Know that you have more than once chance to solve problems.
* Use your sources of strength.

Don’t be afraid to ask others for help. At first, this may seem like a weakness , and you are losing control of your life, but actually it is the opposite. This helps you regain control and your independence. The [Alzheimer's Association National Early-Stage Advisors](http://www.alz.org/about_us_early_stage_advisory_group.asp), and other individuals living with the disease, share their personal insights about the daily strategies they use to address such challenges as managing schedules, taking medications, dealing with changes in relationships and overcoming stigma.  It is a great resource for patients and caregivers alike.