

HEALTH | WELLNESS

The New, More-Hopeful Face of Alzheimer's Disease

Advances in early detection and management of the disease have changed the way patients view an Alzheimer's diagnosis—and how they live with it



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...Thanks to new developments in the early detection and management of Alzheimer's, as well as new medications, **many patients can slow the course of the disease** and boost their well-being. The result is that more Alzheimer's patients are able to live **relatively normal lives for much longer than previously**—several years, at least, and often longer.

...many work-ups now begin with patients seeking to improve their lives by either preventing or lessening mild symptoms, prompted by a host of new findings **about the cognitive benefits of lifestyle interventions**, as well as conditions that can exacerbate decline.

...Now there are **tests** for several physical indicators of Alzheimer's, called **biomarkers**, that can reveal whether there are the telltale toxic proteins of beta-amyloid and tau in the brain. When combined with other information, these results can provide a relatively definitive diagnosis of **early-stage Alzheimer's** disease and enable the person to make **lifestyle changes**, as well as start **new treatments** or clinical trials right away to attempt to alter its course.

...As this early detection and new therapies become more refined and widely known, I am seeing more people come to me in their **50s and 60s**—much younger than the average patient I saw when I first started our memory clinic over 20 years ago.

...For these people, I'm a **coach and counselor as much as a doctor**, encouraging them to maintain an active and normal lifestyle. They need reassurance and practical tips on how to keep engaged on a level that is as meaningful, safe and joyful as possible.

...the medical advances—the early detections, the **recognition of the importance of lifestyle changes, the drug interventions**—have allowed us to adopt a new approach to Alzheimer's, and that new approach, in turn, has given patients permission to figure out ways to **continue to live fuller lives**.

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