

Alzheimer's, dementia care to cost U.S. \$200 billion this year

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Alzheimer's Association projects continued increases in payments as baby boomers age.

(HealthDay) -- Caring for people with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia will cost the United States about \$200 billion this year, a total that includes \$140 billion paid by Medicare and Medicaid, new statistics released Thursday show.

Medicaid payments are 19 times higher for [seniors](#) with Alzheimer's and other dementias and [Medicare payments](#) for the conditions are nearly three times higher, compared to payments for other patients, according to the "2012 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures" report from the Alzheimer's Association.

Nearly 30 percent of people with Alzheimer's and other dementias are covered by both Medicare and Medicaid, compared to 11 percent of people without the conditions. This means that Medicare and Medicaid

costs associated with Alzheimer's and other dementias will continue to rise as baby boomers age, the report said.

"Alzheimer's is already a crisis, and it's growing worse with every year," Harry Johns, president and CEO of the Alzheimer's Association, said in an association news release.

"While lives affected and care costs soar, the cost of doing nothing is far greater than acting now. Alzheimer's is a tremendous cost-driver for families and for Medicare and [Medicaid](#). This crisis simply cannot be allowed to reach its maximum scale because it will overwhelm an already overburdened system," Johns added.

Most people with Alzheimer's and other dementias have at least one other serious chronic health problem, and Alzheimer's acts as a "cost multiplier" on these other diseases, according to the report.

For example, the statistics showed a senior with diabetes and Alzheimer's costs Medicare 81 percent more than a senior with [diabetes](#) alone. And a senior with cancer and Alzheimer's costs [Medicare](#) 53 percent more than a senior with [cancer](#) alone.

[Mental impairment](#) in patients with Alzheimer's and other dementias complicates the management of care, resulting in more and longer hospital stays, the authors noted in the news release.

"This disease must be addressed on parallel tracks: supporting research to find treatments that cure, delay or prevent the disease, and offering assistance and support to the more than 5 million Americans now living with Alzheimer's and their more than 15 million caregivers," Johns said.

"This is what the National Alzheimer's Plan is all about. Caring for people with Alzheimer's and other dementias costs America \$200 billion

in just one year. By committing just 1 percent of that cost, \$2 billion, to research, it could begin to put the nation on a path to effective treatments and, ultimately, a cure," he noted.

The report also said that 800,000 people with Alzheimer's -- one out of seven -- live alone, and that up to half of them do not have an identifiable caregiver. That puts them at increased risk for such health problems as missed or delayed diagnosis, malnutrition and untreated medical conditions. They're also at increased risk for wandering away from home unattended and for accidental death.

Alzheimer's patients who live alone tend to be older, female and have lower levels of cognitive (memory and thinking) impairment, the report noted. However, they still face major challenges in performing daily tasks such as managing money and medications, shopping and preparing meals.

"Advance planning is important for everyone, particularly for individuals who have Alzheimer's or other dementias; but for the population that has Alzheimer's and lives alone, future planning is absolutely critical," Beth Kallmyer, vice president of constituent services for the Alzheimer's Association, said in the news release.

According to the association, an estimated 5.4 million people have [Alzheimer's disease](#), and 15.2 million of their friends and family members provide 17.4 billion hours of unpaid care.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke has more about [Alzheimer's disease](#)

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