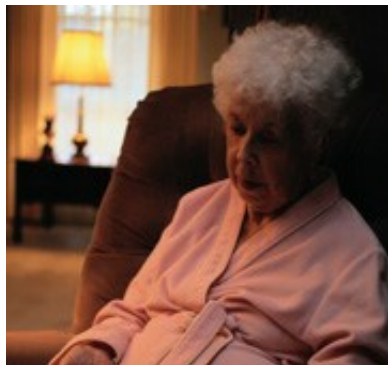


Alzheimer's strikes women harder than men, report finds

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And those over 60 twice as likely to get the brain disease than breast cancer.

(HealthDay)—A 65-year-old American woman has a 1 in 6 chance of developing Alzheimer's disease later in life, while a man the same age has about a 1 in 11 chance.

That's one of the key findings of a new report that highlights the heavy toll that Alzheimer's takes on [women](#) as both patients and caregivers.

Women in their 60s are also twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's than breast cancer, according to the report—"2014 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures"—from the Alzheimer's Association.

The report also found that there are 2.5 times more women than men providing 24-hour care for a loved one with Alzheimer's. Women caregivers are also more likely than men to switch from full-time to part-time work (20 percent versus 3 percent), more likely to take a leave of absence (18 percent versus 11 percent), and to stop working (11 percent versus 5 percent) to meet the needs of a loved one with the disease.

"Women are the epicenter of Alzheimer's disease, representing [the] majority of both people with the disease and Alzheimer's caregivers," Angela

Geiger, chief strategy officer of the Alzheimer's Association, said in a prepared statement from the group.

Of the more than 5 million Americans with Alzheimer's, 3.2 million are women, according to the report.

The total health care cost of Alzheimer's and other dementias is expected to hit \$214 billion this year in the United States. The charge to Medicare and Medicaid will be \$150 billion, and Medicare will spend nearly \$1 in every \$5 on patients with Alzheimer's or other dementias, the report said.

That \$214 billion figure doesn't include the unpaid caregiving provided by family and friends, which is valued at more than \$220 billion, according to the report. Currently, 15.5 million caregivers provide 17.7 billion hours of unpaid care and many suffer their own health problems as a result.

The physical and emotional demands of providing care led to about \$9.3 billion in increased [health care costs](#) for Alzheimer's [caregivers](#) in 2013, the report said.

The impact of Alzheimer's is likely to increase as baby boomers age. If current trends continue, as many as 16 million Americans could have Alzheimer's by 2050 at a cost of \$1.2 trillion (in current dollars) to the nation. That includes a 500 percent rise in Medicare and Medicaid spending and a 400 percent increase in out-of-pocket spending, the report predicted.

Even though Alzheimer's disease is the sixth-leading cause of death in the United States, many people still don't understand it. For example, 24 percent of Americans mistakenly believe they're only at risk for Alzheimer's if it runs in their family.

"Despite being the nation's biggest health threat, Alzheimer's disease is still largely misunderstood.

Everyone with a brain—male or female, family history or not—is at risk for Alzheimer's," Geiger said.

"Age is the greatest risk factor for Alzheimer's, and America is aging. As a nation, we must band together to protect our greatest asset, our brains," she added.

The report appears in the March issue of *Alzheimer's & Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association*.

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

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