



#### **For More Information Contact:**

Erin Kelley, Director of Advancement  
Memory Care Home Solutions  
Phone: (314) 645-6247  
Cell: (314) 471-3444  
Email: [ekelley@memorycarehs.org](mailto:ekelley@memorycarehs.org)

### **Myths About Dementia:**

#### **1. MYTH: Memory loss is a natural part of aging.**

**REALITY:** We'll start off with the toughest myth to dispel. The fact of the matter is we don't actually know how much memory loss is "normal" as we age. Many people will claim they have a harder time remembering things as they age; however, there is no confirmation through research that this is true. Perhaps our minds do become a little less sharp, and we may tend to forget why we walk in a room more often. What is absolutely certain is that memory deterioration as a result of Alzheimer's disease is not a natural part of normal aging.

#### **2. MYTH: Drinking out of aluminum cans or getting a flu shot increases the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.**

**REALITY:** None of these fears has been conclusively proven valid by scientific research. The theory about aluminum is a very old one, says Dr. Anil Nair, and aluminum is widely used in our society in products such as antacids and anti-perspirants to processes such as water purification. He does caution that "if you consume it in large amounts, there is [risk of] neurotoxicity." However, the amount of aluminum leaching out of cookware and cans is miniscule.

It has also been thought getting a flu shot increases the risk of Alzheimer's disease. This theory has been proven wrong in a surprising way—such vaccinations might actually be linked to a *decreased* risk of Alzheimer's. The study published in the *Canadian Medical Journal* in 2001 supports recent suggestions that Alzheimer's disease may involve changes in immune response (research report). Getting a flu shot is fundamentally beneficial for seniors because of their weaker immune systems, and should not be discounted because of its perceived link to Alzheimer's disease.

#### **3. MYTH: Most people with dementia do not recognize they are behaving differently.**

**REALITY:** In fact, most people with dementia *do* recognize they are behaving differently, but probably can't help it. Especially during the early stages of the disease, people with dementia will be aware that their memories are periodically failing. A family member might tell a senior he forgot something, or he might forget his address when he is filling out a form. This is usually embarrassing, and people with memory loss often try to cover it up by making excuses or fibbing, making it seem like they aren't

#### **4. MYTH: There's nothing good about a dementia diagnosis.**

**REALITY:** It would be misleading to suggest dementia is not a devastating disease making life incredibly difficult for the sufferer as well as the family taking care of her. It also puts a tremendous burden on the healthcare economy when appropriate attention isn't paid and the sufferer injures himself by falling or getting dehydrated, resulting in a trip to the ER.

But perhaps we can glean some positive things from a dementia diagnosis. Many families derive satisfaction from meeting the challenge of caring for a loved one with dementia. The diagnosis can reiterate the importance of spending quality family time together while the person with dementia is still living at home. This is especially affecting of families that have members scattered across the country, and bringing them back together to work through a difficulty is often a silver-lining to a dark cloud.