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### Public Health Recognizes Alzheimer's Risk in Women During Public Health Week, April 7-13, 2014

Kingsford and Iron River, MI, April 7, 2014 - Women age 60 and older have a 1 in 6 chance of getting Alzheimer's disease in their lifetime, and are twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's compared with breast cancer, according to a report from the Alzheimer's Association. Men, by comparison, have a 1 in 11 chance of getting Alzheimer's.

Age is the greatest risk factor for gender differences among Alzheimer's patients, but it's not the only reason. Researchers are also looking at genetic and hormonal differences. The disease affects more than 5 million Americans, two-thirds of them women. The new details about this disease and its impact on women come from a survey of more than 3,000 women commissioned by the Alzheimer's Association.

While two well-established risk factors for Alzheimer's are genetics and aging, there is hope that adopting healthy brain life habits might delay or prevent the appearance of Alzheimer's disease, the association says. Here are some tips:

- **Stay physically active** to maintain good blood flow to the brain and encourage new brain cells.
- **Eat a "brain-healthy diet"** low in fat and cholesterol.
- **Stay social** to reduce stress levels and maintain healthy brain cell connections.
- **Stay mentally active** to strengthen brain cells and the connections between them.

Women are also disproportionately affected when it comes to caring for people with Alzheimer's. Sixty percent of caregivers are women and the care they give is more intense physically and emotionally, according to the association's annual report.

Women are more likely to provide round-the-clock care, including feeding, clothing and diapering. The average length of time an Alzheimer's patient requires 24-hour care is four to seven years, but could be as long as 20 years. The cost of Alzheimer's care is estimated to be \$214 billion for this year alone.

Mortality rates for other diseases, like breast cancer, are dropping, but the rate of Alzheimer's deaths is on the rise.

The impact on women disproportionately extends to the workplace as well, where 20% of women, as compared with 3% of men, switch from full-time to part-time work because of their responsibilities as caregivers. Additionally, women are more likely to take a leave of absence from work or stop working altogether. They also report feeling more isolated and depressed than their male counterparts.

Another surprise from the report, although not specific to women: 24% of women and men mistakenly believe they are only at risk for Alzheimer's disease if they have a family member with it. The cultural breakdown is surprising as well, as 33% of Hispanics held this mistaken belief and nearly half of Asians did.

Anyone with a brain is at risk. You can do everything 'right' and still not prevent Alzheimer's, according to the association. In addition to the "healthy brain life habits" listed above, women can also reduce some risk factors by watching their numbers. That includes blood sugar levels if diabetic, blood pressure and cholesterol.

And finally, the association is launching a new initiative in conjunction with the report, asking 1 million women to go to the association's website and share why their brain matters and how they will use it to stop Alzheimer's disease. For more information and for those interested in learning more about this new initiative, please visit the website at [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org).

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