



# TIPS

## for Coping With ALS

*Receiving a diagnosis of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) can be devastating. The following tips may help you and your family cope.*

- ❑ **Take Time to Adjust.** Being diagnosed with ALS is nothing less than shocking. Take time to absorb the information and understand what to expect. Allow yourself time to work through emotional reactions such as denial, anger, sadness, and grief.
- ❑ **Be Hopeful.** Your attitude is everything. Try to remain hopeful. Don't let ALS take away your intellect, personality, or spirit. Don't let your illness define who you are. Try to think of ALS as only one part of your life, not your entire identity.
- ❑ **Think Beyond Physical Changes.** You can look at ALS as a slow death or as an opportunity to enrich your life and make the most of the time you have—a time to foster deeper connections with family and friends and broaden your spiritual awareness.
- ❑ **Seek Early Treatment.** Many symptoms can be reduced with simple treatment. Often these treatments can ease the effects of disease progression. Ignoring manageable problems can make a difficult situation worse.
- ❑ **Take Charge of Your Care.** Physicians and other professionals on your health care team, hospice, and family can help with health care decisions, but remember that you are in charge throughout your illness. Don't let others dictate your care.
- ❑ **Engage Family and Friends.** Life with ALS can trigger overwhelming emotional reactions. Keep lines of communication open, so that you are comfortable expressing your feelings. Encourage your family and friends to express their feelings as well.
- ❑ **Join a Support Group.** Don't think that you need to face this alone. You can get a lot of support and useful information from others who have faced this disease. Your family and friends may also benefit from a support group devoted to caregivers.
- ❑ **Plan Ahead.** Planning for the future allows you to be in control of decisions about your life and your care. Work with your doctor, hospice, and family to formulate plans for life-extending treatments and end-of-life care.