



Physical Activity, Alzheimer's and Dementia

**"If exercise could be packaged into a pill, it would be the single most widely prescribed beneficial medicine in the nation."
*Robert N. Butler, M.D. Former Director,
National Institute on Aging***

Did you know that being physically active is a way to enhance and protect



You may not know, but 50% of individuals over the age of 85 and up to 80% of nursing home residents have Alzheimer's disease or related dementias.² For those individuals living with early stage Alzheimer's disease, engaging in aerobic fitness, such as walking, is a way to slow down the progression of the disease. In fact, one study showed that not only did people physically improve but they also showed improvements in planning, scheduling, and decision making.³



Make sure to consult a physician before starting any new form of physical activity.

Healthy lifestyles which include physical activity may help to create new connections within the brain and reduce some of the risk factors associated with Alzheimer's such as obesity, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, and stress.³

Moderate exercise may also help people with Alzheimer's disease feel better both emotionally and physically. As little as 20 minutes of walking three times a week can decrease risk of falls, boost mood, reduce wandering, and delay nursing home placements.⁴

Benefits of Physical Activity

- Improves sleep
- Improves mood
- Keeps you “regular”
- Maintenance of motor skills
- Reduces risk of falls
- Improves balance & strength
- Reduces rate of mental decline
- Improves memory
- Reduces wandering, swearing, and acting aggressively
- Improves communication
- Improves social skills ⁵

Positive Choices of Physical Activity

- Walking
- Cycling
- Muscle strengthening using weights, bands or tubing
- Swimming
- Aquacise
- Aerobics classes
- Dancing to your favourite music
- Household tasks such as gardening, housework, mowing the lawn, folding laundry.
- Any activity that is enjoyable, promotes self-esteem, and involves social contact.⁵



For more information for Older Adults, contact Forever...in motion at (306)844-4080

References

1. Cotman, C.W. & Engesser-Cesar, C.E. (2002). Exercise enhances and protects brain function. *Exercise and Sport Science Reviews*, 30(2), 75-79.
2. Miller, C. (2004). *Nursing for Wellness in Older Adults: Theory and Practice* (4th ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
3. Better Health Channel. (2008). *Alzheimer's disease: latest research*. Retrieved March 31, 2008 from www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
4. MayoClinic.com. (2007). *Exercise and Alzheimer's: Boosts physical and emotional health*. Retrieved March 28, 2008 from www.mayoclinic.org