

Exercise and Physical Activity

Being active and getting exercise helps people with Alzheimer's disease feel better. Exercise helps keep their muscles, joints, and heart in good shape. It also helps people stay at a healthy weight and have regular toilet and sleep habits. You can exercise together to make it more fun.

You want someone with Alzheimer's to do as much as possible for himself or herself. At the same time, you need to make sure that the person is safe when active.



Getting Started

Here are some tips for helping the person with Alzheimer's disease stay active:

- Be realistic about how much activity can be done at one time. Several 10-minute “mini-workouts” may be best.
- Take a walk together each day. Exercise is good for caregivers, too!
- Make sure the person with Alzheimer's disease has an ID bracelet with your phone number if he or she walks alone.
- Check your local TV guide to see if there is a program to help older adults exercise, or watch exercise videos/DVDs made for older people.
- Add music to the exercises if it helps the person with Alzheimer's disease. Dance to the music if possible.
- Break exercises into simple, easy-to-follow steps.
- Make sure the person wears comfortable clothes and shoes that fit well and are made for exercise.
- Make sure he or she drinks water or juice after exercise.

For more information about exercise and physical activity for older adults, visit www.nia.nih.gov/Go4Life.

Gentle Exercise

Some people with Alzheimer's may not be able to get around well. This is another problem that becomes more challenging to deal with as the disease gets worse. Some possible reasons for this include:

- Trouble with endurance
- Poor coordination
- Sore feet or muscles
- Illness
- Depression or general lack of interest

Even if people have trouble walking, they may be able to:

- Do simple tasks around the home, such as sweeping and dusting.
- Use a stationary bike.
- Use soft rubber exercise balls or balloons for stretching or throwing back and forth.
- Use stretching bands, which you can buy in sporting goods stores. Be sure to follow the instructions.
- Lift weights or household items such as soup cans.



For more caregiving tips and other resources:

- **Read** "Caring for a Person with Alzheimer's Disease": www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/publication/caring-person-alzheimers-disease
- **Visit** www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/topics/caregiving
- **Call** the ADEAR Center toll-free: 1-800-438-4380

The Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center is a service of the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health. The Center offers information and publications for families, caregivers, and professionals about Alzheimer's disease and age-related cognitive changes.

