

The Surprising Extra Benefits of Exercise for Seniors

by Janet Crozier

We've all heard about the many benefits of exercise – a healthier heart, stronger bones, improved appearance, and flexibility – but exercise has many additional benefits, especially for seniors.

“Many characteristics we associate with older age – like the inability to walk long distances, climb stairs, or carry groceries – are largely due to a lack of physical activity,” explains Dr. John Montgomery, a family physician.

However, according to AARP, 40 percent of people between 45 and 64 are considered sedentary. For people over 64, that number jumps to 60 percent.

“Some are worried that exercise will cause illness or injury,” said Montgomery. “Others think exercise means they have to do something strenuous, which they may not be capable of. What they may not realize is that it could be more of a risk not to exercise,” explains Montgomery.

Seniors can benefit tremendously from regular exercise. The Centers for Disease Control reports that seniors have even more to gain than younger people by becoming more active because they are at higher risk for the health problems that physical activity can prevent.

Even moderate physical activity can help seniors to:

- **Increase mental capacity** Research links physical activity with slower mental decline. Exercise increases blood flow to all parts of your body, including your brain, and might promote cell growth there. Exercise – particularly if it starts early and is maintained over time – is beneficial in preventing dementia and Alzheimer's disease. (Source: SeniorJournal.com)

- **Prevent disease** Exercise may delay or prevent many diseases associated with aging, such as diabetes, colon cancer, heart disease, stroke, and others, and may reduce overall death and hospitalization rates, according to the National Institute of Aging.

- **Improve healing** Injuries and wounds take longer to heal as people age. Regular exercise by older adults may speed up the wound-healing process by as much as 25 percent. (Source: SeniorJournal.com)

- **Improve quality of life** A new study has found that previously sedentary senior citizens who incorporated exercise into their lifestyles not only improved physical function, but experienced psychological benefits as well. (Source: SeniorJournal.com)

- **Increase balance** This helps prevent falls, a major cause of broken hips and other injuries that often lead to disability and loss of independence. (Source: SeniorJournal.com)

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SeniorResources

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Mission

To provide a comprehensive and coordinated system of services designed to promote the independence and dignity of older persons and their families in Muskegon, Oceana, and Ottawa – a mission compelling us to target older persons in greatest need but to advocate for all.



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- **Increase life expectancy** Benefits are greater among the most active persons but are also evident among those who reported moderate activity, according to the CDC.
- **A little goes a long way** “When it comes to exercise for seniors, consistency is more important than intensity,” explains Montgomery. Researchers have found that you don’t have to engage in strenuous exercises to gain health benefits. “Moderate exercise, such as walking five or more days a week, can lead to substantial health benefits. Even brief amounts of physical activity, say 10 minutes at a time, can be beneficial.”
- **Never too late** According to the National Institute of Aging, exercise isn’t just for seniors in the younger age range. People who are 80, 90 or older can also benefit greatly from physical activity. Exercising regularly can help prevent or delay some diseases and disabilities as people age. In some cases, it can improve health and independence for older people who already have diseases and disabilities, if it’s done on a long-term, regular basis. “The key is to find something geared to your fitness level that you enjoy doing,” says Montgomery. “And it’s important to start at a level you can manage and work your way up slowly.” Start by seeing your doctor before beginning an exercise program.

Tips for sticking with an exercise program:

- **Have a plan** Identify obstacles and find ways around them. For instance, your fitness routine easily could run off track during the holidays and vacations. Look for hotels with a health club and include a walking or biking tour of scenic or historic places in your vacation plans.
- **Review your goals** If you start to feel it’s just not worth it, think about why you decided to change in the first place. Maybe you wanted to lose weight. Perhaps you’ve lowered your blood pressure or are beginning to control your diabetes. Reminding yourself of the goals you’ve realized and the ones you’re still striving for will help you push ahead.
- **Mobilize your support system** Call on friends, family members, or neighbors who have been your cheerleaders. They can encourage you to stick with it.
- **Be easy on yourself** Falling off track doesn’t mean throwing in the towel. Remind yourself that change takes time. ❖



Helping Children Understand Alzheimer's

by Michael Plontz

Your loved one has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. The first thing you want to do is find out all you can about the disease, and all about what you can do to take care of your loved one. It's a bitter pill to swallow, but at least you're an adult and you can understand what's happening. What about your children? How can you help them cope?

The way in which Alzheimer's may affect children has to do largely with their relationship with the person before. If they are close to a loved one, the mentally debilitating illness could cause fear, anger, sadness, and confusion. If the loved one is living in the home of the caregiver, it can cause these feelings to intensify.

Fear is usually the first emotion to surface. From the fear of their grandparents or other loved ones arise feelings of anger, guilt, and jealousy. All these feelings can lead to sadness and even depression. Also, feelings of despair and helplessness may result from the loss of the loving relationship between child and loved one.

The best thing you can do for your child or teenager is to be completely honest and keep the lines of communication open. If children don't understand, they could act out by doing badly in school or withdrawing or becoming impatient with their loved one. Physical or psychosomatic ailments such as stomachaches or headaches may manifest themselves as well. They may have to be reminded several times that Alzheimer's is a disease, and that the disease is what's affecting grandma or grandpa.

It is helpful to have answers ready for an inquisitive child's difficult questions. The following questions are just the tip of the iceberg, but it's a start.

Q: Is grandma crazy?

A: No. Alzheimer's is a disease. Older adults are prone to illnesses that may make them forget things or act differently.

Q: Is it my fault?

A: Certainly not. If grandma told you that, it is just the disease talking.

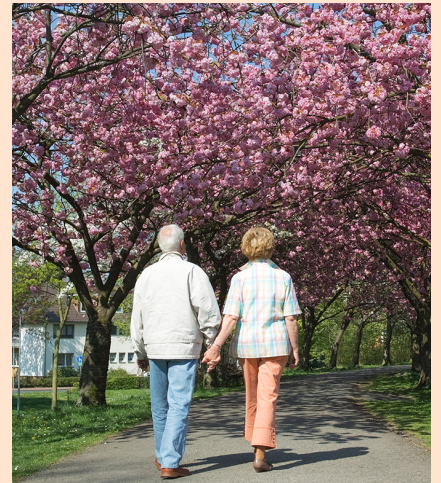
Q: Can I, or my mom or dad catch Alzheimer's disease?

A: Alzheimer's is not contagious, so, no, you can't catch it like you would a cold.

Q: What will happen next?

A: Here the parent must judge how much information the child can handle. The best thing to do is reassure them that you love them, no matter what happens.

With teenagers the questions will probably be a bit more complicated. They can see things from different perspectives. The best thing to do is to inquire about how they're feeling, and what can be done to make them feel better. Regardless of the age of the child, open communication is the key to success in weathering the Alzheimer's storm. ❖



April's Website

www.aarp.org/aarp/caregivers

Quotes

"Spring is April's way of saying, let's bloom."

– Unknown

"Be here now, be like the sun, you don't need permission to exist, to rise, to shine."

– Mark Twain

"April is a promise of what's to come."

– Gladys Taber

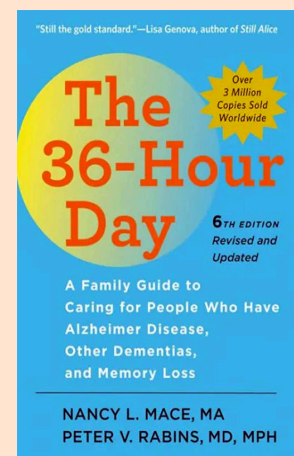
This Month's Book

The 36-Hour Day

by Nancy L. Mace, MA

Peter V. Rabins, MD, MPH

The 36-Hour Day: A Family Guide to Caring for People Who Have Alzheimer Disease, Other Dementias, and Memory Loss.



After a Fall: 3 Things To Do

Source: Trualta



Read the first 3 steps you should follow if your care recipient has had a fall. Learn how they can get up if they're uninjured.

Although there are many ways to prevent a fall, they can still happen when you least expect it. Knowing what steps to take after a fall will help you best respond.

Review the 3 steps below to know how to help after a fall:

1. Check & Comfort

- Breathe, try to stay calm, and comfort the individual.
- Ask them if they have any pain and check for injuries.

2. Not Injured? Says They Can Get Up? Help Safely.

If the person has little pain and says they can get up, follow these steps:

- Grab Two Chairs
- Roll & Crawl
- First Chair in Front
- Second Chair Behind

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BRAIN HEALTH

Source: Harvard Medical School

The most conclusive evidence shows that combining activities that benefit body and soul also reduces the risk of dementia.

A few decades ago, the state of your brain was believed to be beyond your control. Conventional wisdom taught that people are born with a certain number of brain cells, which die over time and are not replaced. But recent years have brought good news: although the areas of the brain associated with memory and reason shrink with age, you can still add brain cells and build new connections between those cells throughout your life.

Dr. Bradford Dickerson, associate professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School, studies how the structure and function of brain areas involved with memory and reasoning change with age. "Many of the activities linked to a reduced risk of dementia may truly be helpful in preserving memory and reasoning," he says. The following lead the list.

1 Physical exercise. "The best evidence so far is for aerobic exercise and physical fitness," Dr. Dickerson says. Not only have scores of observational studies linked regular aerobic exercise to reduced risk of dementia, the results of several randomized controlled clinical trials and a few imaging studies indicate that aerobic exercise increases brain mass and improves reasoning ability. In studies of healthy people that showed the greatest positive effect, people got an average of 30 minutes of aerobic exercise five times a week over a year. Moreover, controlled trials in people with mild cognitive impairment showed that exercise was effective in arresting decline. There is also some evidence that mastering more complicated physical activities, like dance or sports, has greater benefits than repeating simpler ones, like walking. What the studies haven't determined is whether the benefits of exercise disappear when people become sedentary.



2 Mediterranean diet. The Mediterranean diet—high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes; moderate in olive oil and unsaturated fats, cheese and yogurt, and wine; and low in red meat—has been a mainstay of cardiac prevention for almost 20 years. More than a dozen observational studies have shown that it is also associated with a reduced risk of dementia. In those investigations, people who adhered to the diet most



closely had the greatest reduction in risk. Although the few randomized controlled trials have been too short to yield meaningful results, the diet's proven heart-healthy effects alone make it worth following.

3 Social connectedness. Evidence from observational studies linking reduced risk of dementia with social connectedness dates to the 1990s. As researchers have looked into these connections more deeply, they have discovered that variety and satisfaction in social contacts is more important than the size of a person's social network.



4 Mental stimulation. There is some evidence that challenges like playing a musical instrument or learning another language have more benefits than repetitive exercises like crossword puzzles. Although "brain-training" programs are a multi-million-dollar industry, there is no conclusive evidence that any of them improves memory or reasoning ability. "We don't know whether playing brain games is helpful," Dr. Dickerson says. "Getting together with family and friends to play cards may be as good." ❖



After a Fall, continued from page 4

- Tell Healthcare Providers
- Get 2 stable chairs.
- Guide them to roll on their side.
- Have them go into a crawl position with their hands & knees on the ground.
- Put the first chair in front of them.
- Ask them to put their hands on the seat.
- Ask them to bring one foot forward on the floor.
- Put the second chair behind them.
- Ask them to push up with their arms & legs to sit on the chair behind them.
- Guide them to the seat by placing your hands on their hips.
- Tell healthcare providers about the fall.

3. Injured? Unsure? Call 911

- If you think they are injured, don't try to help them get up.
- Call 911, even if you are unsure.
- Keep them warm with a blanket while waiting. ❖

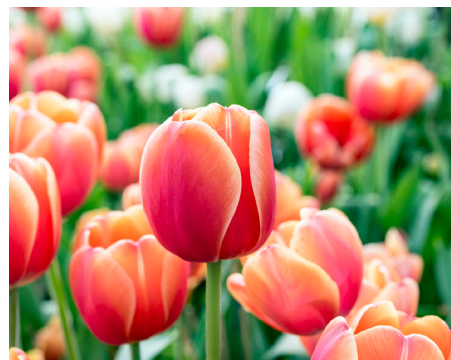


Facts for Your Next Trivia Night

1. Recent research shows that exercise positively impacts nearly every cell in our bodies.
2. M&M'S Chocolate Candies were introduced in 1941, and one selling point is that they wouldn't melt in warm weather. In 1950, a black "M" was added to the candy so consumers could tell the difference between the real deal and imitations. The "M" was changed to white in 1954.
3. Pumpkins, avocados, and tomatoes are technically fruits.
4. Flamingos are pink from the high amounts of beta-carotene in their diets.
5. Honey doesn't "expire" due to a variety of factors, including its moisture content and acidity.
6. Water is the only substance on earth that exists naturally in three forms: solid, liquid and gas as ice, water, and water vapor, respectively.
7. We don't know why, but research shows that in the days leading up to a full moon, people go to bed later and sleep less, reports Cleveland Clinic Health Essentials.
8. Despite the name, Thomas' Breads English Muffins aren't British; the product was invented in the U.S.
9. It takes sunlight eight minutes and 20 seconds to travel from the sun to earth.
10. Vanilla is a member of the orchid family. This means "those little brown flecks in your vanilla bean ice cream are vanilla orchid seeds," per the Smithsonian Institute. ❖

Tulips

Tulip cultivation likely began in Persia (Iran) in the 10th century, and it eventually became a symbol of the Ottoman Empire. Tulips were introduced to the Western world by Augier Ghislain de Busbecq, the Viennese ambassador to Turkey, who wrote of seeing the plants in Edirne, Turkey, in 1551 and later sent some seeds to Austria.



The arrival at Antwerp in 1562 of a cargo of tulip bulbs from Constantinople (now Istanbul) marked the beginning of the horticultural tulip industry in Europe. An early recipient of these flowers was French botanist Carolus Clusius, who was an avid bulb grower and is often credited with the spread of other spring bulbs, such as hyacinths and irises, across Europe. In the 1590s he established a botanic garden at the University of Leiden and cultivated tulips there. In 1596 and again in 1598, broken tulips (tulips that bloom in streaks or flames of color) were stolen from Clusius's garden, and the genetically variable seeds of those purloined flowers became the foundation for a lively tulip trade. A speculative frenzy over tulips in the Netherlands in 1633–37 is now known as the Tulip Mania.

The tulip produces two or three thick bluish green leaves that are clustered at the base of the plant. The usually solitary bell-shaped flowers have three petals and three sepals. There are six free stamens, and the three-lobed ovary is terminated by a sessile three-lobed stigma. The fruit is a capsule with many seeds. Many garden tulips can be propagated only by their scaly bulbs.

Tulip flowers occur in a wide range of colors except true blue—from purest white through all shades of yellow and red to brown and deepest purple to almost black. Almost 4,000 horticultural varieties have been developed from a number of species and hybrids. There are several different classification schemes based on the plants' time of bloom, flower shape, and plant size. Among the tulips that appear earliest in spring are single-flowered and double-flowered early types. Tulip types that bloom in mid-season include Mendels and Darwins. Late-blooming tulips are the largest class, with the widest range of growth habits and colors. Among them are Darwins, breeders, cottage, lily-flowered, double late, and parrot types.

Generally, solid-colored tulips are spoken of as "self-colored," while streaked blossoms are called "broken." The phenomenon of color streaks in tulips is due to a harmless virus infection that causes the self color to disappear in certain zonal patterns, leaving the flower's white or yellow underlying color to show through in irregular streaks.

Tulips flourish in any good soil but do best in well-drained loam. The bulbs are usually planted in autumn at a depth of 10 to 20 cm (4 to 8 inches) below the surface in a soil enriched with compost. Though they will continue to flower annually for a few years, they tend eventually to degenerate. A common commercial practice is to lift the bulbs after the flowers have ceased blooming and the foliage has turned yellow and then to store the bulbs in a cool dry place until replanting time in autumn. In general, tulips are remarkably free from attack by garden pests. ❖



APRIL

WORD SEARCH

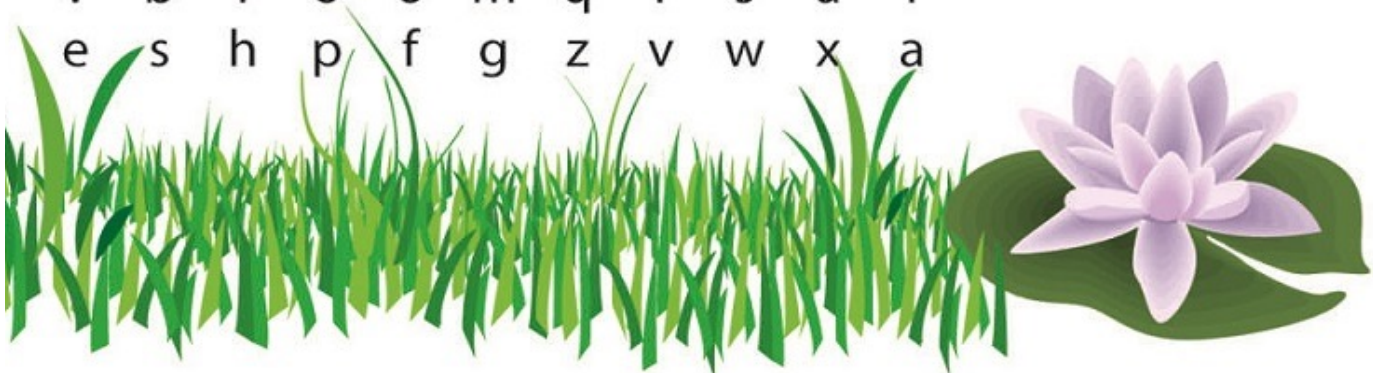


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WORDS

- showers
- underground
- daffodil
- tulip
- bloom
- taurus
- diamond
- earth
- easter
- passover
- fool





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